Oxfam Management response to the evaluation of
Oxfam Together Against Poverty multi-country
agriculture and climate change adaptation advocacy program

A: Context, background and findings

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

Oxfam is nearing the end of a 3-year phase of a longer-term multi-country agriculture and climate adaptation advocacy program that seeks to tackle key issues and barriers faced by women and men small-scale producers in order to improve livelihoods and reduce food insecurity and poverty. The work has been operating in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Italy, The Netherlands, Brussels (focused on the EU), and Addis Ababa/Nairobi (focused on the African Union) since 2015 and in France since 2018.

In April 2021, Oxfam hired an external consultant team to conduct an evaluation of the work from 2018 to 2021. The purpose of this evaluation was to review of progress in achieving the desired outcomes of the program, to understand the extent to which Oxfam and our partners and allies had contributed to these outcomes, and to identify ways to improve our work going forward.

The evaluation provides a meta-level review of progress over the last three years in contributing to the desired outcomes across the different geographies, looking for patterns across all countries. The focus was on outcomes rather than outputs; therefore the consultant team used the Outcome Harvesting methodology.

2. Summary main findings and recommendations

The evaluation found (from the Executive Summary) that the program contributed to important outcomes in quantity and quality of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Europe, and in small scale farmer and female farmer friendly policies in Africa. As with all advocacy programs, no outcome can be attributed to a single source, since policy change is subject to so many complex forces. Instead, this review looks at what the contribution of the program was to the outcomes that actually occurred. While some outcomes are intermediary – such as verbal commitments by policy makers, or new platforms for civil society representation – they are nonetheless potential stepping stones to future ultimate outcomes. There were fewer outcomes around the CAADP Biennial Review process, though participation of civil society at AU deliberations on it have been active, and recommendations from civil society organizations have been incorporated into official meeting statements.

For strategies and tactics, the production of evidence and use of civil society coalitions have been among the most effective strategies for producing these outcomes. The incorporation of farmers associations into these coalitions brought heightened legitimacy to advocacy efforts, and could be developed further in future work. The design of the program created great potential for linkages between African and European civil society organizations and governments, though the potential was not always realized. Decentralized management
allowed country programs to pursue what made the most sense locally, but nonetheless reduced the synergy that the program could have achieved in injecting African voices into European policy debates. Although not always reported on in the TAP progress reports, interviews and discussions showed significant, mutually beneficial interaction between TAP and other Oxfam programs, especially at the country levels.

Recommendations:
1. Improve local to global linkages, and build joint activities explicitly into work plans. Better link the work of this program with the work of other Oxfam programs and efforts.

2. African country programs need to integrate CAADP work into their dialogue with governments, or abandon engagement with the AU around it. If the program opts to continue using CAADP as a tool, then more resources to the civil society coalition at the African Union would multiply the program’s influence.

3. Expand the advocacy for Gender-Responsive Budgeting, especially in training key government officials across countries on how to do it, raising awareness among stakeholders and the general public on what it is, establishing better collaborations between NGOs and other stakeholders on the method, and strengthening NGO work on increasing women’s agency and creating mechanisms for farmers to have input into budgets.

4. Documents and interviews showed a concern for more explicit support to climate change adaptation. The review found that work on climate change adaptation is already built into the program in its promotion of women in agriculture and in promoting agroecology. The program can emphasize it more explicitly, but it is already there. If staff and partners want to expand their work on adaptation, the program could promote a wider set of resilience building activities for rural residents, beyond agriculture.

5. In the future, share media resources across countries, and develop the capacity to assess the results of media engagement.

6. Focus more on building the capacity of farmer groups, rather than just individuals, and facilitating them to form strong coalitions can have long term benefits. Make it clearer to target policy makers which respective farmer groups they are engaging with when Oxfam facilitates sessions for interaction. This could also increase the participation of smallholder farmers in high-level meetings with government officials and fashioning work plans with civil society coalitions.

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

3. Summary of evaluation quality assessment, i.e. quality of the evaluation is strong/mixed/poor and short assessment of the process (e.g. good, wordy report)
Overall, the evaluation is of high quality. It is well-written, clear and concise. The consultant team managed, in a short amount of time and with a limited budget, to speak to stakeholders in each of the geographies where the work is taking place, including government and NGO representatives. While this was a meta-level assessment, the evaluators were able to validate contributions and identify some pattern that provided important lessons for the program team.

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

With the launch of TAP 2, we agree to act on key recommendations in all areas of this evaluation in order to improve the effectiveness of our advocacy. In particular, we will strengthen team partnerships and collaboration, so we operate more effectively as a joined up team collaborating across geographies. Overall, this program is operating with reduced resources compared to prior grant cycles. Additionally, the new Strategic Framework expresses a reduced emphasis on this body of work. As a result, in responding to these recommendations, we are mindful of the reduced resources and capacity overall.

**Improving Local to Global Linkages:** Acknowledging that not all aspects of this work will line up with clear linkages across geographies (and joint advocacy entails trade-offs with other advocacy priorities), the team agrees to give more attention in the annual planning process to identifying and capitalizing on campaigning/advocacy opportunities. This will include finding/creating opportunities to facilitate engagement of African farmer leaders in policy debates in the EU and the Netherlands. Additionally, more attention will be given to shared opportunities to develop research and analysis that reflect interest and priorities between African and European country teams. A high-level research agenda will be developed in year 1 but will leave flexibility for updates as project priorities evolve. The team will also develop a learning agenda in year 1 that can help continue to answer questions about how to improve global to local influencing.

**CAADP:** With new staff in the Pan Africa Program (PAP) office and a new strategic framework guiding continental advocacy priorities, it is appropriate to reconsider how the PAP and broader TAP 2 team engage the AU around the trajectory of agriculture development on the continent and the CAADP Biennial Review (BR) process/tool. Such a review should examine: 1) political opportunities and “space” to directly engage the AU/AU organs and formal processes; 2) review of the role of the CAADP NSA in engaging with the AU; 3) analysis of how the CAADP BR is leading to increased visibility of our issues and accountability by government actors; and 4) how to effectively link AU-level advocacy on agriculture development issues and CAADP to AU-and other continental level dialogues on climate change. The PAP office will lead on this review and refresh; the team will be updating their strategy by mid-October. Outcomes from this work should inform our advocacy over the next grant period.

**GRB:** The team agrees to expand their Gender-Responsive Budgeting advocacy. The country offices will develop GRB strategies that take into account the GRB learnings
developed under TAP 1. To begin this process, countries will identify what areas of influence within GRB advocacy (e.g., influencing the budget process, focusing on citizen engagement, etc.) make the most sense to focus on within their respective contexts. A GRB training based on the learnings can be developed and implemented for key government officials in TAP 2 countries; a training is currently being developed for Nigeria and can be adapted for other contexts. Teams can help link to the evolving/expanding climate agenda of TAP 2 by including climate spending in addition to agriculture spending in their GRB advocacy. Throughout the work, teams will continue to center the voices of women small-scale farmers and promote their active citizenship in policy and budgets.

**Climate Change Adaptation:** Internally, the TAP 2 team will look to link with, learn from and collaborate with others around the confederation working on climate change policy and programs. The internal architecture for managing our climate change advocacy is still evolving, but we recognize the opportunity to engage with the Oxfam Climate Initiative (OCI) as we build out our ambitions on this agenda. In addition, we will look to support the ambitions of the OI Climate Policy Lead in her role. We will reach out to both colleagues during our annual planning process as well during key advocacy moments (both planned and ad hoc) to the OCI and other teams working on climate advocacy to strengthen linkages across teams and ensure our advocacy is aligned with and contributing to Strategic Framework objectives of climate justice. The TAP 2 team should also be proactive in identifying discrete areas where it can lead on behalf of the confederation to deepen/develop our thinking. For example, the TAP 2 team could lead efforts to better define the kinds of agriculture development we want to promote. The upcoming COP 26 could provide an opportunity to coordinate countries and affiliates in TAP 2 and link with OI, particularly around the World’s March for Climate Justice initiative. There are potential linkages to a grant being supported by the PAP office and Novib (African Activists for Climate Justice) that should be explored.

**Media/Public Communications:** This recommendation points to both the aspiration for greater visibility of the TAP advocacy work as well as the underutilized potential of public communications (across markets) to drive change. No specific actions are planned in response to this recommendation as the grant provides little resourcing for media and communications. Where feasible, media and communications materials will be developed, especially around shared advocacy moments. We will encourage African teams to document and make available photographic, audio and video resources from meetings and other public engagements in order to improve how we “tell the story” of this advocacy work. Teams in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Ghana are continuing to do this type of work.

**Farmer Groups:** The team agrees to continue to strengthen meetings between small-scale female food producers and policy makers, government officials and other stakeholders both at the country and affiliate level. Some political targets include national officials and EU commissioners in charge of agriculture, food security and trade. Internally, the team will connect more often between affiliates to ensure policy debates in Europe are informed by Oxfam teams in Africa and community members. The team will also think about creative ways to organize and mobilize female food heroes given the Covid-19 context.
Any conclusions/recommendations Oxfam does not agree with or will not act upon - and why (this reflection should consider the results of the evaluation quality assessment)

The evaluation makes several critical observations regarding advocacy toward the African Union which raise important questions regarding strategy, tactics and allocation of resources. While we agree that the advocacy outcomes targeting the AU are less robust than in other areas, documentation of impact was more difficult including because of staff turnover. Given this, further consideration of how to better capitalize on limited political opportunities within the AU is needed.

As mentioned above, there are no specific actions planned in response to the media/public communications recommendation as the grant provides little resourcing for this.

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

None.