Woman leader and activist. Photo: Dustin Barter/Oxfam

GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE RESILIENCE PROGRAMMING

EXPERIENCES FROM BANGLADESH AND MYANMAR

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INTRODUCTION

Oxfam believes that resilient development is only possible when gender-based inequalities are transformed and women and men can fully enjoy their rights.[1] Gender transformation calls for a redistribution of power and a commitment to tackling the many forms of inequality that are on the rise. Oxfam is committed to adopting feminist thinking and principles throughout its work, including organizational structures and approaches to programmes, advocacy, knowledge and communications.

Limited research has focused specifically on the connection between gender transformation and resilient development, and a knowledge gap exists on how to contribute to gender transformation by achieving systemic changes and addressing the root causes of gender inequality in resilience and climate programming.

This study aims to bridge that gap by making an in-depth review of the interlinkages between gender transformation and resilient development in Bangladesh and Myanmar. This research took a feminist and participatory research approach,[2] and the report outlines the outcomes of learning journeys carried out in both countries. It looks specifically at progress made and challenges in relation to gender transformation, and shares the learning and recommendations that arose. The research took place between January 2019 and March 2020.

The research looked at three main questions:[3]

1. What are we doing that is working/not working within resilience programmes to achieve gender-transformative change?

2. Which strategies have led to gender transformation? How did they strengthen the resilience capacities (adaptive, absorptive, transformative)? What were the enabling factors/barriers?

3. How can we make resilience programmes more gender transformative? Which strategies can be used to increase and scale up gender transformation? What interventions can be implemented to overcome the barriers?

METHODOLOGY

The research included a literature review, gender analyses and in-country learning journeys in Bangladesh and Myanmar as sources of learning on how resilience programmes can achieve gender transformation. This research project mainly employed qualitative methods and used feminist and participatory action research as its core framework and approach. Further details about the research methodology, including its limitations, can be found in **Annex 1** of this report.

The learning journeys in both countries consisted of **participatory processes** that included:

• a gender context analysis

• an internal analysis on how the programme contributes to gender transformation

- an Action Planning workshop to identify possible strategies and initiatives that could contribute to gender transformation within the programme

- reflection and learning.

Each country chose a specific area within the programme on which to focus the research.

Qualitative methodologies, including focus group discussions (FGDs), semi-structured interviews and reflective discussions, were used for the processes described above.

Research locations and methodologies

Bangladesh	
Research location	The research focused on the coastal areas where, according to the Oxfam team, people's vulnerabilities to climate change are highest: Buri Goalini and Atulia Unions of the Shyamnogar Upazila, Satkhira District.
Desk-based literature review	A desk review was carried out of relevant published, grey and programmatic literature.
59 key informants interviewed: *30 women* *29 men* *6 FGDs:* *1 male-only group* *2 female-only groups* *3 mixed groups*	Semi-structured interviews and FGDs were conducted with key informants including community members, climate leaders involved in community-based organizations (CBOs), NGO staff, local government representatives and Oxfam partner staff. The majority of informants were aged between 18 and 65 years.
Myanmar	
Research location	The research focused on Kachin state.
Desk-based review	A desk review was carried out of relevant published, grey and programmatic literature.
Internal project reflection exercises	Two workshops were organized with representatives of Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), Durable Peace Programme (DPP) staff, Oxfam staff and the research team. Two additional project reflection exercises took place with KBC staff.
Key informant interviews: *2 women* *3 men* *FGDs:* *6 women* *3 men*	Key informant interviews were conducted with representatives of KBC's Women's Department, the Zonal Departments, and a gender awareness-raising training provider. Interviews and FGDs were conducted with women and men who had participated in KBC's gender awareness-raising training.
Action Planning workshop	An Action Planning workshop engaged parties involved in managing and delivering the gender awareness-raising trainings (KBC staff, and external partners including representatives of women's rights organizations). The Action Planning workshop took a peer learning approach.

THE CASE STUDIES

Bangladesh

Shyamnogar Upazila, Satkhira District

Resilience through Economic Empowerment, Climate Adaptation, Leadership and Learning (REECALL)

REECALL is a resilience-oriented programme that combines climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction with economic empowerment, women's transformative leadership, rights and governance.

Focus of the Bangladesh research:

Transformative leadership for women's rights in climate action

Myanmar

Kachin State

Durable Peace Programme (DPP)

The DPP works in a consortium of national organizations and international NGOs. Its main purpose is to support local civil society's contributions to durable peace, security, stability, sustainable development and gender equality.

Focus of the Myanmar research:

Gender Awareness-Raising Training in Peacebuilding

THE BANGLADESH LEARNING JOURNEY

THE REECAL PROGRAMME

The Resilience through Economic Empowerment, Climate Adaptation, Leadership and Learning (REECALL) programme in Bangladesh was launched in 2010. It is a resilience-oriented programme that combines climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR) with economic empowerment, women's transformative leadership, rights and governance. The first phase was implemented through over 800 CBOs under 65 Unions across 14 Districts, supporting around 75,000 households, or 225,000 women and men.

REECALL reports[4] having made an impact in the areas of economic justice and women's empowerment, including women's increased income, agriculture and livestock production. The programme has supported the formation of women's groups that enabled women to take part in adaptive income-generating activities through business start-up support, market training and links with high-value markets. Working within established CBOs, women collectively make decisions about production, accounting, and investment planning and savings. Women's leadership has been an integral part of REECALL: supporting women's inclusion in local decision-making bodies, thus elevating their socio-economic status and reducing violence against them, while fostering a more conducive environment for women's leadership and empowerment, and ultimately for gender equality.

In 2017, REECALL embarked on its second phase, 'REECALL 2021', which builds on the evidence and results of the first phase as well as inputs from community-based, national and international actors. The programme aims to contribute to the transformative vision of more resilient women, men and institutions working together to improve wellbeing and create more inclusive and sustainable rural economies.

The major commitment of REECALL 2021 in relation to gender justice and women's empowerment was to go beyond providing material resources, to empower women and improve their access to markets to generate livelihoods, and to focus on women's agency in economic decision making and influencing. Programme impact is expected in the following outcome areas: i) economic justice and women's empowerment ii) climate action and DRR and iii) active citizenship and knowledge management. The outcomes are being achieved through a number of linked interventions under the following building blocks: livelihoods and markets, gender and women's leadership, climate change adaptation and mitigation, DRR, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), active citizenship, influencing, ICT and knowledge management, knowledge and awareness.

REECALL's impact, programme quality and learning practices have made it one of Oxfam GB's 14 flagship programmes globally. The REECALL team was part of the Resilience Knowledge Hub's Gender Justice in Resilience Challenge in 2017/2018. The REECALL 2021 programme sees women's empowerment as a way for women to break out of poverty. Interventions are meant to focus simultaneously on increasing livelihood generation and market access, and advancing gender equity and women's leadership by reducing the unpaid care work burden among women, developing women's soft skills to enable them to control their own income and resources, and sensitizing men to

the need for and benefits of equitable gender relations. Clear advances have been made in the economic justice and women's empowerment outcome areas. However, for the purpose of this research, the decision was made to explore a relatively unknown area: **transformative leadership for women's rights in climate action**. It was believed that this would give a useful overview and potentially inform new ways of strengthening leadership in action on climate change, which (in addition to poverty) constitutes the main source of stress and shocks among communities involved in the programme.

KEY FINDINGS FROM BANGLADESH

Gender context analysis in brief

In Bangladesh, despite notable improvements in gender equality indicators, especially in relation to maternal mortality and education,[5] women still face social, cultural and financial discrimination. Poor women are particularly vulnerable and experience multiple challenges such as limited access to and control over land, productive assets and capital, with less than 10% of women employed in the formal sector.[6] Women and girls are also exposed to domestic and other forms of violence.[7] This all translates into more suffering for women in the face of crises.[8]

Bangladesh acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1984. Its Constitution recognizes equal rights for women and men in the public sphere. The National Women's Development Policy 2011 and the National Action Plan drive the government's action on gender equality. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO),[9] in recent decades Bangladesh has made strides in gender equality in several sectors. These include political participation, as Bangladesh now has the eighth lowest gender gap in political empowerment in the world, and the economic sphere, as men and women are employed in equal numbers in manufacturing, and the vast majority of workers in the ready-made garment sector are women. In addition, women's life expectancy increased from 54.3 years in 1980 to 69.3 years in 2010, one of the largest increases in the region.[10]

Despite this progress, gender inequality remains deep and pervasive in Bangladesh. The proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before they were 18 is still high, at 58.6%, and in 2015, 28% of women aged 15-49 years reported that they had been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence from a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months.[11] In addition, there is still a lack of methodologies to acquire comprehensive and systematic information on areas such as gender and poverty, physical and sexual harassment, women's access to land, or gender and the environment.[12]

It is recognized that women in Bangladesh are especially vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters, in a country which ranks sixth on the Global Climate Risk Index.[13] Despite the country's recognized adoption of effective climate adaptation models, women's lack of access to assets, information, policy-making processes and social networks severely undermines their resilience.[14]

According to FGD participants in Shyamnogar Upazila, Satkhira District, the major effects of natural disasters include destruction of agricultural land, increased soil salinity and damaged fish stocks, crops and cattle. Disasters also lead to increased unemployment and major economic problems, including higher costs of basic commodities and staple foods. Government-provided services, particularly the health system, can be severely disrupted, and harmful coping mechanisms, such as child marriage, can become more likely.

The effects of natural disasters on women and men differ in many ways. For men, disasters result in loss of income and damage to assets they control (crops, fish and livestock, etc.), leading to stress, increased male unemployment and pressure to migrate from rural to urban areas, where they may become involved in anti-social activities, including begging. Boys are put at particular risk from working in hazardous jobs such as rickshaw pulling, welding, plastic industries or motor repair. Male authority can be diminished or challenged as family norms or coherence break down. All of these effects undermine men's health, especially their mental health.

For women, the impacts of natural disasters include increased domestic violence, physical or mental abuse and/or sexual exploitation and transactional sex, and early or forced marriage. Domestic work (carrying water and fuel, etc.) becomes more demanding and often leads to girls being taken out of school. Women face many health problems including higher maternal mortality rates, lower-quality menstrual hygiene management, depression and other stress-related mental health issues. Widows, women-headed families, women from ethnic minorities, elderly women and those living with disability face additional social, economic and security challenges.

How does the REECALL programme contribute to gender transformation?

Overall, REECALL reports[15] having made progress in enhancing women's leadership through increases in women's income, knowledge, awareness, influencing capacity, mobility, networking capacity, decision-making ability, skills contributing to financial capital, and platforms to raise their united voices and to access information.

The main strategies that facilitated this progress are:

- **Formation of CBOs** that contributed to the sustainability of community-based joint ventures and strengthened women's voices. Community members form their own CBOs, creating space for joint discussion, decision making and action (such as facilitating savings and access to loans), and for holding local governments to account.

- **Development of networks**, both online and offline, helping women to be a part of a learning-sharing platform and also to leverage resources and support from stakeholders, service providers and duty-bearers. Networking meetings and workshops have accelerated the leadership process and increased women and girls' mobility and influencing ability in the family, local government and private sector.

- **Awareness raising** with the target community helped its members to increase their knowledge about their vulnerabilities, risks, strengths, rights, the responsibilities of duty-bearers, and how they can achieve more together. The topics also included gender-based violence (GBV). This helped women to come forward and take a lead in making others aware about their rights, thus promoting leadership.

- Training, meetings and workshops provided the community with **platforms for capacity building, creating linkages** between rights-holders and duty-bearers and enabling joint planning. Continuous facilitation and capacity-building training on leadership, rights and entitlements, new technology, sources and means of sharing information, worked well in the process of empowering

women as leaders and allowed women to raise their voices at family, community and stakeholder levels.

- **Financial support** to individuals and CBO-level income-generating activities led to improvements in women's socio-economic conditions.

- **Linking** duty-bearers with community-level rights-holders ensured that community members could leverage the benefits they are entitled to.

- **Income-generating activities** involved community members in climate adaptation initiatives and increased women's income along with their skills, knowledge and confidence to grow as economic actors. Increased income helped to strengthen women's position at both family and community levels by allowing them to have more influence over household and community-level decisions.

- **Introducing new technology** to the communities helped them to take advantage of wider knowledge sources (websites, apps, social networks) and enhanced their communications with duty-bearers.

- **Creating market linkages** between income-generating activities and potential market stakeholders helped to develop value chains, and ensured that community members gained better market access and higher prices for their products.

- **Engagement in the influencing process** with duty-bearers increased women's leadership abilities as it raised their confidence levels and increased their knowledge about their rights, the role of duty-bearers and stakeholders, sources of information, etc.

Opening up possibilities for women's leadership

In the Climate Action and DRR area of work, it was observed that the opportunities provided by REECALL enabled women to step up and play an important role in cyclone responses. Alongside other governmental and non-governmental assistance programmes, this created openings for women to **practise leadership and take on new community roles**. According to research participants, women now have more **knowledge and capacity** to address disaster and related risks. This has had a positive impact on their lives and has also made the men in their households more aware of women's rights and more cooperative.

The FGDs revealed that after Cyclone Aila in 2009, **women started to become more aware about disaster preparedness and to acquire preparedness knowledge and skills.** According to one participant: *'Today, they can even build homesteads and toilets. They demonstrated an even greater awareness during the 2019 'Bulbul' crisis, which saw no loss of human life or major damage' (FGD, January 2020, Satkhira District).* Female leaders have made major contributions to increasing women's disaster management skills. Both men and women have received skills training on rescue, first aid and GBV. Women's WASH groups worked closely with the community, managing the distribution and disposal of sanitary towels, moving pregnant women to safe places and raising awareness about disaster early warning signs, keeping food dry and storing firewood. Women also took part in repairing and improving buildings.

According to FGD participants, as a result of the programme women are also more capable of disseminating and sharing knowledge with their neighbours. This **growth in women's confidence and skills** is exemplified by a woman animator of the Oxfam's Participatory Research and Ownership with Technology, Information and Change (PROTIC) project.[16] She receives text messages from the

project regarding weather forecasts and livestock vaccination campaigns, which she then shares with the community so they can take action to protect their crops and animals. She stated: *'In previous times, women were not allowed to go out. But today they can go wherever they want'* (Female-only FGD, January 2020).

Still a long way to go…

However, while there has been increased acceptance of women in leadership roles and recognition of their enhanced skills, male FGD participants **observed men's negative behaviour towards women and their lack of sensitivity regarding gender-specific needs and priorities**. These participants described some of the concrete actions that they undertake as community leaders to contribute to enhancing women's capacity. For example, they reported helping women to create lists of vulnerable women for inclusion in government social safety net programmes and to access different governmental and non-governmental services. They also said they understand the importance of menstrual and other female hygiene issues.

As observed by the Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC) and partner staff, REECALL provides women with the space to be proactive and assume real authority as leaders. However, **women who are not part of the programme continue to depend on men, and – formally or informally – men dominate the local government system**. For example, the UDMC and Ward Level Disaster Management Committee (WDMC) should have at least 30% women, according to policy, but in practice it does not achieve this target. A male leader told us that *'...currently, women are taking more leadership roles than before, but this still falls below satisfactory levels. We have kept the need to incorporate more women foremost in our minds, and will involve more women in different committees in future.'*

Transformative leadership for women's rights in climate action

Oxfam in Bangladesh defines leadership as: 'People with a common vision and purpose of social justice, guided by shared values, individually and collectively, and using their power, resources and skills to mobilize others to deliver social, economic and political transformation for equality and a future that is secure, just, and free from poverty.'[17] The definition is oriented towards mobilizing for change, which presumably includes gender transformation, though this is not explicitly stated. It also differentiates between the individual and the collective (self-awareness, leadership identity, enabling environment and shared leadership), closely aligning with the change areas of Oxfam's Transformative Leadership for Women's Rights (TLWR) framework and its four core elements of 'the self', namely: i) principles and values, ii) politics and purpose, iii) practices and iv) power.[18]

However, according to the TLWR approach, for leadership to be able to achieve and sustain gender-transformative change, it needs to be driven by clearly defined politics: it means challenging and transforming power relations, structures and ideologies that justify and perpetuate gender inequality and power imbalances. This approach also recognizes different forms of power. The most traditional one, 'power over', is associated with a hierarchical process, where a leader uses his or her authority to control people's actions and thinking. Transformative change requires other forms of power: 'power within' (a person's sense of self-worth), 'power to' (a person's capacity to decide and carry out desired actions) and 'power with' (which refers to joint action by individuals and communities). These nuances

are not clearly defined in the REECALL programme, or at least not in a way that was accessible to this research.

FGD participants were asked about **the knowledge/skills/attitudes required for leadership roles and behaviours**. In practice, according to research participants, **leadership mostly relates to personal/individual or collective/systemic absorptive and adaptive resilient capacities**. The FGD participants suggested that a leader should have the capacity to lead during a socially problematic or a natural disaster situation. They should be willing to work for others and have relevant skills, knowledge and capacities. Leaders are individuals that people can depend on; they are proactive and aware of the problems of the people. They have a clear understanding of natural disasters and their management. Leaders understand women's vulnerability (compared to men's) and women's rights, including access to services. They are 'people-friendly' and able to identify and empathize with the range of problems people face, including depression, during disasters.

Male participants mentioned the need for training to change the patriarchal mindset, to prevent early and forced marriage and redistribute the unpaid care work that is largely done by women. Women participants discussed the need for leaders to have a clear understanding of the practices for registering CBOs with government authorities. They also felt that leaders should have broad knowledge about managing disasters, and mentioned midwifery training, salinity and desalination, saline-tolerant crop production, storm and lightning protection, first aid training, vaccination and paramedic training. While the scope of participants' responses indicated the need for knowledge/skills/attitudes among leaders that would serve to develop predominantly absorptive and adaptive capacities, male participants' reflections on the need to change patriarchal behaviour could serve as an entry point for development of transformative capacities.

The research revealed that **perceptions of female and male leadership are highly gendered** and the products of restrictive patriarchal norms. CBO female and male leaders interviewed made clear distinctions between the leadership practices of women and men. Male leaders maintain a patriarchal mentality and consider women to be dependent and reluctant to practice leadership. Female leaders expressed the view that their society is patriarchal, with women less powerful than men. They said: *'Women are lagging behind.'*

When discussing the **factors that enable or restrain transformative leadership for women's rights in climate action**, FGD participants also highlighted the differences between men and women. Among the enabling factors, research participants shared that momentum has been created around women's rights, resulting in a slight change in people's mindset. Both women and men CBO members said that men are now more cooperative, motivated and aware of women's rights. Women observed an increase in women's self-confidence and skills, and a new sense of unity among women. They believe that women's aspirations have increased and that strict gender roles are changing. They recognize that a willingness to confront gender issues is being created.

However, the list of the **restraining factors** was far longer. During the focus groups, UDMC and partner staff suggested that it will take many years to dismantle the patriarchal system. They recognize that the challenges women face in the private and public spheres are driven by familial, societal, economic, political and religious factors. Husbands represent families and communities. Men dominate the government's social safety net programmes. Policies that regulate political participation and access to land and assets are not gender sensitive, nor are they implemented in a way that could ensure gender equality.

For male research participants specifically, the restraining factors include women requiring their husband's permission to go out of the house; husbands' jealousy and guardianship over wives; women's disproportionate responsibility for care work; and an imbalanced ratio of men and women in

committees. Female research participants shared a long list of restraining factors, including: restrictions to leaving the house due to social norms, and those norms being guarded by a culture of shaming and blaming women; inadequate implementation of policies that support equal participation, which results in male domination of committees and women's voices not being heard; wage differences; women's lack of access to markets; excessive family/household work pressure; and the requirement to wear the Parda/Hijab. Women also told us that another factor that restrains their leadership is inadequate male involvement in gender awareness initiatives and inadequate knowledge dissemination among men.

While research participants recognized the factors that restrain gender transformation, when asked **how transformative leadership for women's rights in climate action can be enhanced by Oxfam**, their answers predominantly related to actions contributing to adaptive resilient capacities (e.g. more women in committees, women-only groups, access to childcare centres) and absorptive capacities (e.g. capacity building, toilet facilities with breastfeeding, first aid, search and rescue services, disabled-friendly devices). However, the answers did include some strategies with more transformative potential, which could be integrated in DRR and climate change adaptation programming (indeed, some of these suggestions are already part of the REECALL programme). They are:

• Share knowledge/experience on gender transformation and resilience practices as projects currently have low implications for policy change, limiting their potential to achieve long-term change and gender-transformative resilience.

• Revise UDMC and WDMC policies from a gender perspective and increase women's participation in policy making.

• Increase initiatives to enhance women's economic empowerment.

• Work closely with men/spouses so that they can be part of these initiatives.

• Support efforts to redistribute care work within the household to reduce women's care responsibilities.

Finally, in such a gender-biased and restrictive context, **challenging the status quo leads to different forms of resistance and backlash**. In the FGDs, some examples emerged of men denying their wives the right to participate in Oxfam activities. '*One example is that of a local woman who went to take part in a training of the PROTIC project. She had to stay away two nights. The neighbours told her husband, "Your wife is spoiled, spending nights away from home." Her husband felt insulted and told her to give the phone back to PROTIC. She did as he instructed and gave up being an animator.' (Female-only FGD).* Except for awareness-raising activities and the *nari adda*[19] (meetings where women share thoughts and stories about their personal and professional lives), REECALL does not offer intentional strategies to handle resistance and backlash or support/care for women leaders, which are needed to accompany transformative efforts. REECALL is addressing women's household care burden through Rapid Care Analysis,[20] couples' meetings, and ensuring access to finance for women entrepreneurs. The programme has formed a multi-stakeholder forum to carry out policy advocacy on addressing the care burden issue.[21]

Findings in brief: reecall and gender-transformative resilience

Progress so far/what has worked

- Engaging women in disaster response and recovery has contributed to women's leadership and helped to shift norms and perceptions on gender roles.

- The formation of CBOs has enabled women to take part in income-generating activities, increase their knowledge about their rights and the responsibilities of duty bearers, and to take part in the influencing process – increasing their confidence and leadership abilities.

Challenges

- While there has been increased awareness of women's rights and acceptance of their leadership roles, this is largely confined to those who are directly engaged in the programme.

- Female and male participants in the research listed an extensive list of barriers to gender equality and women's leadership, suggesting that it will take many years to dismantle the patriarchal system.

Potential strategies to promote gender-transformative resilience

- Consider how male participants' reflections on the need to change patriarchal behaviour could serve as an entry point for development of transformative capacities.

- Revise UDMC and WDMC policies from a gender perspective to ensure that committees are gender balanced, and increase women's participation in policy making.

- Increase initiatives to enhance women's economic empowerment, and work closely with men/spouses so that they support and can be part of these initiatives.

- Support efforts to redistribute care work within the household to reduce women's care responsibilities.

- Enhance spaces to influence climate change debates, actions and policies by supporting women-led CBOs and enhancing the agency and sense of unity among women engaged with CBOs.

THE MYANMAR LEARNING JOURNEY

THE DURABLE PEACE PROGRAMME

In Myanmar, the Durable Peace Programme (DPP) works through a consortium of national organizations and international NGOs. Its main purpose is to support local civil society's contributions to durable peace, security, stability, sustainable development and gender equality in Kachin State.

Increasing gender equality and reducing GBV are central crosscutting and standalone components of the programme. DPP is implemented by a seven-member consortium composed of national organizations – the Kachin Baptist Convention, Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS), Metta Development Foundation, Nyein (Shalom) Foundation – and international NGOs: SWISSAID, Trócaire and Oxfam (managing partner). The consortium works in partnership with a network of over 25 civil society organizations and believes that a strong, diverse and active civil society is crucial to supporting rights and resilience. The current programme spans 3.5 years (2018–2022) and builds on the preceding phase, which was implemented between February 2015 and July 2018.

The **Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC)** was chosen for this research collaboration in agreement with Oxfam staff and KBC. The decision was based on a combination of practical considerations (stage of the project, time availability and willingness of staff and partners, access to communities, etc.) and the relevance of KBC's work to the sectors and theme on which the research focused.

KBC is a large faith-based organization, with headquarters in Myitkyina, Kachin State. It has 15 associations and over 300 churches, and most of its 400,000 members are Kachin people. KBC has 15 departments, one of which is the Humanitarian and Development Department (HDD), with the mandate to address the suffering caused by disasters and the consequences of poverty due to injustice and unfair distribution of goods and resources. KBC's HDD supports a wide range of communities, including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and conflict-affected villagers. This includes provision of shelter for IDPs, food, WASH, and protection for extremely vulnerable people such as women and children, and IDP camp coordination and management.

Within the DPP, KBC is responsible for implementing activities under each of the programme's four key outcome areas: durable solutions and community resilience; livelihoods and land; peacebuilding and social cohesion; and gender equality and GBV. KBC's DPP programming activities include constructing shelters, supporting early childhood development centres, livelihood and vocational skills trainings, land rights awareness raising, interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding trainings, civic and peace education (with a third party) – as well as increasing women's empowerment and gender awareness through community-based trainings.

In 2017, KBC adopted a Gender Policy – rooted in its Christian values – with the support of DPP, and is developing a Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy. KBC's willingness to strengthen its own gender equality systems is a positive indicator of the transformative potential of its programmes.

The focus of this research, chosen by KBC staff, was **Gender Awareness-Raising Training in Peacebuilding** (henceforth 'gender awareness training'), an activity implemented by KBC in the context of the DPP.

KBC staff chose this research theme in part as a reaction to comments by local members of the KBC network and congregation, who had expressed fear that gender awareness trainings and gender inequality interventions more generally – especially those conducted by gender equality and women's rights organizations – cause conflict in the family and are thus to be avoided.

KBC saw its gender awareness training as offering a broad contribution to the gender equality efforts of the programme. Because the training takes place in the same communities as its intensive women's leadership trainings (see below), it helps prepare favourable ground for the women participants and their activities. All of this was understood to promote resilience, as summarized in the DPP's key strategy document:

'Durable solutions and community resilience: By preparing IDP populations for safe and dignified returns or resettlement, DPP will support any eventual transition from humanitarian crisis to recovery, rehabilitation and development. By supporting the development of capacities and assets needed for improved communal resilience and protection, DPP will help both IDPs and conflict-affected communities to weather the consequences of living in a context of widespread and increasing violence. This includes significant focus on specifically supporting women to assert their durable solutions rights, including those related to land and restitution, as this is critical for improving gender equity, while it is also important that women are influential in decision making processes related to durable solutions, such as ensuring protection concerns are adequately addressed.'[22]

KEY FINDINGS FROM MYANMAR

Gender context analysis in brief

Myanmar is undergoing a profound economic, political and social transition.[23] This is causing uncertainties, shocks and stresses, which are exacerbated by environmental conditions that make the country the second most vulnerable globally to extreme weather events,[24] and by the country's protracted conflicts (especially in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States).

In Myanmar, women appear to enjoy the protection of recent legislation, such as the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW). However, gender inequality is persistent and manifests in women's poor access to land and other resources, and in their absence from decision-making roles at all levels of public life. There is continued discrimination against minority ethnic women, in particular the Rohingya, who face systematic discrimination, including restrictions on freedom of movement, access to land, food, water, education and healthcare, and on marriages and birth registration.

Myanmar ratified the CEDAW along with the Beijing Platform for Action in 1997.[25] The government's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment are further outlined in the NSPAW (2013–2022). However, these policies do not guarantee gender equality, as many gender-discriminatory laws still exist, and national and especially local leadership structures are male-dominated. The ward and village tract administrators who are responsible for implementing and enforcing many laws at the local level are almost all men, with women accounting for less than 1% of these positions across Myanmar[26]. This often means that women's interests are not represented.

Kachin State lies in the North-East of Myanmar, bordering China, and has been affected by decades of armed conflict. In June 2011, a 17-year long ceasefire agreement between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) broke down, resulting in extensive loss of life, damage to infrastructure, destruction of livelihoods and the continuous displacement of close to 100,000 civilians.

Conflict and displacement affect women, men, girls and boys (as well as gender non-conforming people) differently. In Kachin State, men make up the majority of casualties in combat and are more vulnerable to drug addiction, forced conscription and arbitrary detention. Due to existing gender inequalities, women and girls are disproportionately affected by the ongoing conflict and displacement. For example, women and their dependants make up 76% of IDP camp populations,[27] who face limited access to essential services and supplies. The many female-headed households in Kachin State face an increased burden of work and responsibilities. Women are also more likely to be victims of GBV.

Across Myanmar, norms and practices clearly define what behaviour, responsibilities and opportunities are considered appropriate for women and men – and place restrictions on women in social, economic and political spheres. In traditional Kachin society, women are usually responsible for taking care of the family and managing household chores, while also contributing large amounts of time to agricultural or other income-generating work. Men typically engage in income-generating activities outside the house, mostly in the agricultural sector and construction, or they migrate within Myanmar or cross the border into China for work. The Zonal Director interviewed for this research reflected this strict gendered division of labour in his description of women and men's daily lives in Kachin State when he stated that *'[men] have the power and influence in the family'.*[28]

Cultural and religious norms and social practices pose barriers to women's participation in decision making and leadership, including in the peace process. Therefore, despite women's unique experiences and needs in conflict and displacement, they are widely underrepresented in important decision-making bodies and in peacebuilding.

The protracted conflict and displacement have also impacted the construction of masculinities and the norms and behaviours of men. Men living in IDP camps and other conflict-affected areas are often unable to fulfil their culturally prescribed role as the 'breadwinner'. This can cause a lack of self-esteem and the use of negative coping mechanisms such as drug abuse, leading also to increasing rates of GBV, including domestic violence. Changes in the climate and decreasing availability of natural resources are also seen as causing stresses in the family, as mentioned during one of the FGDs in November 2019: *'In our society, [where the people are] mostly from rural areas, men's livelihoods were easy as they relied on natural resources, natural vegetation, and natural forestry plantation. However, the natural resources are reducing day by day, and the consequences might be that there is not enough income, and their living standard will fall. Men become addicted to drugs… In some households, men shout at their wives if the food is bad. This is a moral problem of men and needs to change.'*

How does the Durable Peace Programme contribute to gender transformation?

In order to appreciate progress (or lack thereof) towards transformative resilience made by KBC's gender awareness trainings, it is important to have a sufficient understanding of the programme, and especially of how it approaches gender and resilience.

Resilience and gender in the Durable Peace Programme

DPP does not explicitly refer to or make use of the Oxfam Framework for Resilient Development. Nevertheless, it addresses issues of resilience,[29] for example by establishing civilian protection mechanisms to monitor the compliance and attainment of basic IDP rights, setting up and strengthening complaint desks in 20 IDP camps, and building 35 shelters for IDPs to support their return, resettlement and local integration. During the research, it appeared that there had not been sufficient discussion on how DPP understood the notion of resilience, despite its inclusion in the language of the programme's documents. The KBC DPP team reflected that they understand resilience as the ability or capacity to resist unexpected shocks, stresses and hardships. According to this understanding, KBC sees resilience as relevant to all of its activities under the DPP.

The KBC DPP team also reflected on the importance of gender equality in resilience, especially within the Kachin State context, where women are disadvantaged across a range of key indicators. For these reasons, KBC seeks to mainstream gender across all DPP capacity-building activities – such as civic education and leadership training – with an overarching aim of increasing women's leadership. KBC also seeks to ensure that women, as well as men, benefit from livelihoods and land rights initiatives. For example, KBC supports early childhood development centres, which help to reduce women's unpaid care responsibilities and therefore support their income-generating capacities.

DPP has a specific gender outcome (Outcome 4: Improved women's empowerment for social, political and economic action and reduction in gender-based violence) in addition to its gender-mainstreaming approach. This dual approach has roots in its analysis that: '*gender inequity permeates all strata of society throughout Myanmar, with Kachin and Northern Shan facing specific inequities, due to the armed conflict settings… Despite the gendered impacts of armed conflicts, women are systematically excluded from influencing positions in formal and informal peace processes, from the community to national level, while also facing similar exclusion from politics.*'[30]

DPP's intention on gender could therefore be considered transformative, since the programme's stated aims concern women's social, economic and political empowerment as well as their leadership and gender equality, even though it lacks an analysis and language that specifically link these aims to the notion of transformation. What is more obvious from the DPP's planning documents is the absence of feminist language or ambition. This is not surprising, given that DPP is a consortium that brings together members and sub-grantees of very different orientations and people of different personal and professional backgrounds. In Myanmar as a whole, there are extremely negative connotations surrounding the concepts of feminism and feminists, to the extent that '*Even female women's rights activists often deny being feminists, trying to avoid being labelled as such.*'[31]

As recommended by the 2018 evaluation of the first phase of DPP, an Organizational Gender Analysis was undertaken in April 2019. Findings showed many differences across the consortium in terms of gender policies and gender balance and skills in staffing. While none of the consortium members are women's rights organisations (WROs), in the second phase of DPP an increasing number of WROs have been engaged as sub-grantee partners. These include local organizations Htoi Gender, Kachin Women Peace Network, Kachin Women's Association, Ta'ang Women's Organization and Myanmar Institute of Gender Studies. In programmatic matters, the analysis

expressed concern about how livelihoods work would address women's role as (often sole) providers without further straining their 'double/triple burden' (i.e. adding income generation to women's already heavy load of care/domestic and community work) or reinforcing stereotypical gender roles.

The analysis led to the development and approval of a Gender Strategy for DPP, which contains a ToC as a guide to achieving gender transformation. With the presence of a dedicated Gender Advisor, DPP is now undertaking many gender-specific activities to remedy the gaps identified by the analysis. For example, each consortium member is being supported to develop a Gender Action Plan as well as to enhance its technical capacities on gender. The programme is developing women's leadership capacities and opportunities through intensive grassroots leadership empowerment training as well as training in life skills, political awareness and gender awareness. Towards the goal of developing women's leadership, two long-term training events took place in the first year of the programme. One of these was implemented by KBC: an intensive grassroots leadership empowerment training, in which 24 women from different IDP camps and communities took part. KBC also constructed a women's centre, enabling women to come together to share experiences, take time for self-care and receive information on gender equality and GBV.

KBC's Gender Awareness-Raising Training in Peacebuilding

As stated above, the specific focus of this research, as chosen by KBC, was its gender awareness training. KBC was particularly interested in understanding whether training delivered by different 'providers' – local pastors and representatives of WROs – differed in terms of its purpose and methodologies, and in terms of the impact it had on women and men participants.

The relevance for resilience of reflecting on various types of gender awareness training lies in the fact that one of the DPP's core assumptions is that gender equality is essential to achieving durable peace, and hence resilience. In fact, KBC's stated purpose of its gender awareness training is: *'to promote and encourage a general understanding of gender-related challenges, and the gender pay gap and to show how values and norms influence our reality – as well as to reduce gender stereotypes and the structures that produce inequalities.'*[32] In the first year of DPP (August 2018 – August 2019), KBC implemented 11 gender awareness trainings, each lasting three days. These were attended by 344 participants (209 women/135 men): there were fewer men than women because men tend to be absent from the villages and camps during the day, as they are busy with income-generating activities. Both KBC and DPP are trying to ensure more male participation in similar activities in future.

KBC provides only broad guidelines to gender awareness trainers, and identifies trainers who have understanding both of gender and the context. This includes people from WROs but also, for example, local pastors. The detailed training content and methodologies are left to the discretion of these providers. Logistics and facilitation remain the responsibility of KBC staff in the different geographical zones.

This research was not able to look in depth at the differences between training providers (the reasons for this are discussed below). However, the study led to useful findings about past trainings and decisions about future activities, both of which have relevance for gender transformation.

First, the research concluded that the training activities improved the gender awareness of target communities. As a female trainer reflected, '*There are some [participants] who had never heard of [gender concepts] … [and after the training] they said they have learned more.*'[33] In addition, both

female and male participants are said to have become more aware of their human rights. Female participants reflected during the FGD: '*We also learned about laws. We have never learned [about] them before.*'[34]

Participants of the gender awareness training were also found to have learned about the different gender roles and responsibilities that women and men are socially expected to assume in Kachin, and the need to share care work. A woman FGD participant stated: '*I learned that in the family, the household chores should be done together, without distinguishing between women and men. The wife and husband should support each other in a family. If the wife is busy, the husband does the work.*'[35] It was observed that there was still some gender stereotyping and reluctance by males to engage. In particular, women participants in the FGD reflected that while '*women are very excited about it [the gender awareness training]… it is still difficult to motivate men*'.[36] The female trainer expressed a similar sentiment, stating that during the training not many men were active: '*mostly women are active… [however, when they do engage] men are a bit hard or strong.*'[37]

In line with KBC's policy and approach, which provides autonomy at Zonal levels and works in partnership with local organisations, training providers are at their discretion to design each training session. Several of the trainers consulted stated that they had not been provided with information or guidance from KBC about the overarching purpose or specific objectives of the training. However, during the peer learning workshop in February 2020, those involved in managing and/or delivering the training could easily reach a mutual agreement on its rationale, purpose and objectives. At the same workshop, some disagreements and sensitivities emerged among the stakeholders – KBC staff and trainers – around whether or not women are 'oppressed' and whether the term 'women's rights' should be used in training.

In conclusion, the gender awareness training has led to: a greater appreciation of human rights within the communities, a better understanding of socially determined gender roles, and some redistribution of care responsibilities within households. Comments such as the following by a male FGD participant were not uncommon: '*The way I treat my wife and the way I teach my children has changed. Although I think the discussion was more about women's rights, we (men) have to know about them.*'

Despite the significantly positive outcomes of the gender awareness raising trainings listed above, the training so far made limited progress on shifting deep-seated stereotypical notions on masculinity and femininity. Norms of gender inequitable attitudes and behaviours are often deeply embedded and therefore processes of learning and behaviour change often take time and require longer-term exposure to new ideas and information. Hence, trainings cannot be judged as ineffective if the changes observed are relatively small, particularly if they are new or working in challenging environments.

Some lessons learned on gender awareness trainings within existing evidence could be used to reflect on measures that could contribute to positive impacts: the attendance and length of the programme (currently there is only one awareness training for each community), accountability measures (monitoring and evaluation of trainings in order to measure outcomes and impact more systematically), and consistency of key objectives and messaging within training materials and methodologies (currently training providers are at their discretion to design each training session).

Concepts and language of gender transformation (and others associated with feminism) were not used in the training for many reasons, including:

1. Clear ideas about gender transformation and how to translate these into practice (e.g. through the presence of a Gender Advisor, a Gender Strategy, etc.) only became part of DPP after the programme had been fully designed. This made it unlikely that these concepts would be adopted

in the activities that were already being implemented by different partners. Ideas associated with resilience and the Oxfam Resilience Framework never became central to DPP.

2. Oxfam is just one of several members of the DPP consortium. Each member (including KBC) also works with other stakeholders (in this case, trainers), thus forming complex layers and webs of relationships and communications that make sharing and agreeing on gender approaches extremely difficult.

This points to the need for careful and early negotiations when promoting gender transformation and feminist principles, as well a 'slow and steady', contextually integrated approach to gender-transformative action. Gender awareness training and other activities that promote gender equality should draw from aspects of local culture, tradition and religion which uphold principles of respect and fairness, to counteract negative gender norms and stereotypes and promote true transformation.

The research in Myanmar highlights a tension that exists between the values of mutual respect and autonomy that are central to Oxfam's partnership practices, and Oxfam's commitment to promoting innovative and progressive gender-transformative approaches that partners may be uncomfortable with. DPP and KBC staff are often aware of these problems and try to overcome them, for example through the use of Oxfam's Gender Leadership Programme (GLP), which is based on the TLWR model.[38] There is, however, less awareness of other gaps, such as the absence of WROs from the consortium and the lack of engagement with the ToC in the DPP Gender Strategy.

The question as to whether using trainers with different backgrounds led to different outcomes, in terms of changing participants' beliefs and practices, remains unanswered. However, the study did highlight inconsistency in the key concepts and messaging used; while trainers from the WROs appeared to use a more standardized type of gender training, pastors appeared to draw on Biblical messaging. A more in-depth analysis of this would have needed considerably more time and resources than were available. The topic is also highly sensitive, requiring an external evaluation approach to ensure neutrality and to avoid jeopardizing relationships between a variety of stakeholders within and outside the consortium. Finally, too insistent a focus on comparing providers would have contradicted the feminist principles and participatory method adopted, which meant prioritizing the areas that stakeholders identified would benefit them, and avoiding sensitivities.

In summary, KBC's gender awareness training has already shown some positive outcomes, but its contribution to gender transformation remains limited as outlined above.

It should be noted that the research itself has helped KBC to shift towards aspiring to gender transformation, as reflected in this statement by a staff member: *'We aim to promote gender transformation at the community level through [the gender awareness-raising] training; however, further support would be required in order to achieve this milestone.'*[39]

Findings in brief: DPP and gender-transformative resilience

> **Progress so far/what has worked**
> • The DPP programme undertook an organizational Gender Analysis (2019) and has developed a Gender Strategy. With the support of a Gender Advisor, DPP is undertaking gender-specific activities; for example, each consortium member is being supported to develop a Gender Action Plan and to enhance its technical capacities on gender.

- KBC has shown itself to be open to adopting of ideas and practices of gender transformation. KBC has developed a Gender Policy and is developing a PSEA Policy, and has appointed a gender focal point especially for DPP.
- The gender awareness training activities have led to: a greater appreciation of human rights within communities, a better understanding of socially determined gender roles, and some redistribution of care responsibilities within households.

Challenges

- WROs are absent from the consortium (the DPP engages with WROs as 'sub-grantees' for project implementation).
- Although a DPP Gender Strategy has been developed, there is a lack of engagement with the ToC of stakeholders in the consortium.
- Training providers are at their discretion to design each gender awareness raising training, drawing on different concepts and messaging.
- Training has so far made limited progress on shifting deep-seated stereotypical notions on masculinity and femininity.
- Concepts and language of gender transformation (and others associated with feminism) were not used in the training.
- A tension exists between the values of mutual respect and autonomy that are central to Oxfam's partnership practices, and Oxfam's commitment to promoting innovative and progressive gender-transformative approaches that partners may be uncomfortable with.

Potential strategies to promote gender-transformative resilience

- Including WROs in the consortium could bring much-needed gender expertise and knowledge to DPP, while increasing the organizational capacity of local WROs.
- Gender-awareness training and other activities that promote gender equality should draw on aspects of local culture, tradition and religion which uphold principles of respect and fairness, to counteract negative gender norms and stereotypes and promote true transformation. Feminist concepts and the associated approaches and strategies could be explicitly discussed so that misunderstandings at any level are avoided, and agreement is reached on what is acceptable and effective in practice.
- KBC could develop a ToC (possibly on the basis of the TLWR framework already adopted by DPP) that helps to clarify what the training is trying to achieve, and whether training is the only or best approach that would lead to such results. The same ToC could be used to ensure that this activity is aligned with other gender-specific activities implemented by KBC as part of the DPP.

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REFLECTIONS ON USING A FEMINIST AND PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH APPROACH

As outlined above, the research adopted a feminist and participatory action approach, which calls for continued reflection and learning throughout the process.

Particular attention was paid to promoting not only involvement of but also ownership by all participants, namely Oxfam staff and partners, local researchers and, where possible, women and men in the communities. The skills and commitment of staff and partners greatly facilitated this. Principles of equality and mutual respect were applied to the relationships among all those involved in the research.

Although the initial broad research questions could not be designed with the Oxfam staff and partners who eventually were involved in carrying out the research in country, they decided on its particular area of focus. The fieldwork was organized and carried out by country staff, and a budget was made available to implement the actions that were collaboratively agreed on by the research participants.

As mentioned in the Myanmar case study above, at times there was a tension between adopting feminist principles, such as respecting the autonomy of partners and other stakeholders, and balancing this with the need to address and overcome some stakeholders' reluctance to adopt gender-transformative approaches. This reluctance has various sources: lack of familiarity with the relevant ideas and their application, influence of the social environment, staff position that does not permit decision making, or simply lack of time to digest and internalize new ideas. Failure to resolve this conflict is often at the cost of real impact on gender transformation, which becomes deprioritized in the interest of delivering agreed results in a hurry, or of maintaining good relations and leverage with national power structures and donors.

GENERAL REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

• The research confirmed that gender-sensitive approaches are not sufficiently disruptive of prevailing gender power structures, but are often tolerant and accommodating. Such approaches are still necessary and have had an impact in developing absorptive and, to some extent, adaptive capacities. However, developing transformative capacity is vital to achieving gender equality and resilience. Gender transformation requires strategic, concerted and intentional changes to the systems that create risk, vulnerability and inequality. Gender-transformative programming can

combine gender-transformative approaches with other less disruptive approaches. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bangladesh is using a dual approach in enhancing adaptive capacities of coastal communities to cope with climate change. Its gender mainstreaming strategy is gender responsive, 'by embedding women's perspectives, and the necessary safeguards and considerations to ensure that existing inequalities are not exacerbated' and gender transformative 'in the sense that it addresses root causes of vulnerability and structural barriers to climate resilience, and challenges the norms around the gendered distribution of labour and constraints in regards to land tenure and participation in community decision-making'.[40]

- Many of Oxfam's programmes have sought to increase gender equality through targeted activities for women, for example promoting women's representation.[41] However, programmes should focus on systematic attempts to achieve transformational shifts by actively challenging and changing the discriminatory social norms, practices, laws and behaviours that prevent equal engagement of women in the first place. The Bangladesh example shows that there have been changes in how community leaders support gender-specific needs and priorities. However, negative gender attitudes and norms prevail, and policies that regulate political participation and access to land and assets are not gender sensitive, nor are they implemented in a way that could ensure gender equality. The research shows that inadequate attention is given to both formal and informal aspects of collective/systemic change. In contexts where restrictive gender norms are fuelling discrimination against women and girls, actions to address those informal norms are rare. In addition, opportunities for transformative change provided by formal policies and laws in development processes are also missed, due to limited links with feminist movements and other national platforms. In the case of Bangladesh, the agency and sense of unity among women generated through their engagement with CBOs during crises could be further enhanced. If nurtured, it could create new, localized solutions that further promote solidarity among women as well as advancing women-led CBOs, thus providing new spaces to influence climate change debates, actions and policies.

- Achieving gender-transformative outcomes requires strong political will and institutional capacity from Oxfam and partners, consistency in assessing and supporting transformative values, commitment and leadership, and relevant knowledge and skills among all staff and managers. It also needs to be put higher on the agenda when interacting and negotiating with authorities and donors. This entails increasing Oxfam staff and partners' competence in influencing others on gender-transformative change, in ways that are principled, engaging and contextualized. Some of these conditions were found in both case studies, though were possibly undermined by staff turnover. Sensitive and sustained support is also required to maintain these conditions. In the case of Myanmar, DPP and KBC offer promising environments for the adoption of ideas and practices on gender transformation. DPP has demonstrated the necessary will and institutional capacity by adopting a Gender Strategy, recruiting a Gender Advisor among its staff, identifying a specific gender outcome, and earmarking financial resources for programmatic and organizational tasks on gender equality. Similarly, KBC has been developing both a Gender Policy and a PSEA Policy, and has appointed a gender focal point especially for DPP. It also demonstrated strong staff capacity and confidence in choosing the research theme and leading its process, sharing knowledge of the local context, being open to scrutiny throughout this research, and developing and implementing the Gender Action Plan.

- Gender transformation and feminist principles are formally and informally the accepted points of reference (and language) of all gender work in Oxfam. Oxfam has embraced strong feminist principles to underpin both its programmes and internal functioning, and this is essential to a transformative approach. However, this research revealed a variety of positions on these feminist principles and approach among Oxfam's partners. The differences are mostly due to the sensitivity and political nature of feminist ideas and language. For this reason, in many contexts Oxfam avoids their overt use, favouring more acceptable terminologies and ideological points of

reference. It is important to invest in promoting discussions and creating a good understanding of feminist principles among staff and partners.

- Considering these differences in understanding of and positioning on feminist principles, there is a need for careful and early negotiations when promoting gender transformation and feminist principles, as well as a 'slow and steady', contextually integrated approach to gender-transformative action. Gender-awareness training and other activities that promote gender equality should draw on aspects of local culture, tradition and religion which uphold principles of respect and fairness, to counteract negative gender norms and stereotypes and promote true transformation. As the Myanmar case shows, concepts on feminism may be unfamiliar to local partners and unacceptable to local communities. In programme and projects designed and delivered in partnership with others (or in a consortium, as in the case of DPP), feminist concepts and the associated approaches and strategies must be explicitly discussed so that misunderstandings at any level are avoided, and agreement is reached on what is acceptable and effective in practice.

- Gender transformation is inextricably linked to the 'nexus approach', which ties humanitarian, development and peacebuilding to create a joined-up system that is capable of addressing crises while simultaneously delivering scaled-up, long-term, systemic change. Gender transformation can thus be modelled by using a nexus approach and a holistic ToC to create a joined-up system capable of achieving resilient development. In Myanmar, DPP is a complex programme spanning the development-humanitarian and peacebuilding sectors, and operating across a large geographical area through a consortium of many partners and their sub-grantees. In these circumstances, even more than in smaller, localized projects, it is essential that all aspects of the work are carefully supervised and monitored. While ways of working should always aim to promote the creativity and autonomy of actors, engaging in sensitive actions – such as challenging local gender norms and relations – requires careful discussions and agreements on what approaches and pathways are most suited to delivering the proposed outcomes while avoiding and mitigating risks. These include risks to participants (e.g. violence against women who are benefitting from such interventions), risks to communities (e.g. through an increase in tensions and conflict), and risks to the reputation of the programme and the organizations involved.

- A gender context analysis in the first stages of the programme is vital to understand gender power inequalities and to further develop programme outcomes and activities based on these findings. This research also highlights that appropriate sequencing within the programme cycle is essential. The case studies show that potentially transformative tools (such as the use of a gender context analysis or appropriate ToC) are often made available only *after* a project has been fully designed, with little possibility of making significant changes. Gender context analysis should include research on possible backlash and resistance to redistributing power and to gender transformation, and approaches should be designed to mitigate these.

- A Theory of Change is essential to gender transformation. Gender-transformative outcomes should be included in the ToC, and strategies to achieve these should be discussed and agreed upon. In the case of Myanmar, gender awareness training has the potential to promote transformation. KBC could develop a ToC (possibly on the basis of the TLWR framework already adopted by DPP) that helps to clarify what the training is trying to achieve, and whether training is the only or best approach that would lead to such results. The same ToC could be used to ensure that this activity is aligned with other gender-specific activities implemented by KBC as part of the DPP.

- Oxfam's Framework for Resilient Development outlines six closely connected social change processes which programmes should enhance, that together develop absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities. While 'women's rights and empowerment' is included as one of the six social change processes, all five others must also adopt gender-transformative aims and approaches. Engaging in several interconnected social change processes simultaneously is more effective in promoting gender transformation.

- There is ample evidence of the effectiveness of women's rights organizations (WROs) in bringing about gender transformation, especially by policy influencing. Investing in collaboration and partnership with both grassroots and national-level WROs has added advantages in facilitating and localizing the processes of gender transformation at all stages of a programme. WROs should be the main driving force in setting the agenda, and partnerships with them should become a minimum standard in resilience-oriented programmes. Allowing WROs to maintain their autonomy is vital for women's rights. Oxfam should therefore be careful to preserve and nurture the independence and leadership of WROs' and women's movements' own politics and purposes that rest on different forms of feminism, e.g. eco-feminism that is influencing climate actions. In the case of Myanmar, stronger partnerships and collaboration with WROs, and including WROs in the consortium, could bring much-needed gender expertise and knowledge to DPP, while increasing the organizational capacity of local (minority ethnic) WROs.

- The TLWR framework was adopted for this research as it sees gender-transformative change as both an outcome and a process. TLWR is a key pathway towards gender transformation in resilience programming, and is a useful approach for directing the practice of both Oxfam staff and partners to bring about fundamental changes – whether in the home, the community or in their own institutions. The TLWR framework can be a useful tool for ensuring that programmes give attention to both the personal/individual and collective/systemic, formal and informal aspects of change. The framework can also be used to guide gender context analysis and development of the ToC.

For more practical tools and resources, please see the concepts and tools contained the guide: **Transforming Gender Inequalities: Practical guidance for achieving gender transformation in resilient development**.[42]

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2 More information on the research methodology and approach is available in Annex 1.

3 These research questions were adapted to the country contexts and the specific theme of the selected projects. They were also regularly reviewed and reinterpreted in the course of the research, in line with the methodological principles of feminist and participatory action research.

4 REECALL 2021 Theory of Change Narrative (Draft 2.0, last updated on 16 February 2018).

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11 Ibid.

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