

# EMPOWERING YOUTH FOR WORK (EYW)

*End-of-term evaluation to assess the three programme outcomes and their likely sustainability relative to context, assess the synergy and impact of these outcomes for youth empowerment, and draw lessons for future programming*

## About the Project

In 2016, Oxfam with funding from the IKEA Foundation launched Empower Youth for Work (EYW), a 5-year program with the goal of socio-economically empowering **young women and men in remote and climate-affected (semi-)rural regions of Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Indonesia**. EYW aimed to work with youth mostly between the ages of 15 and 29 and up to 70 percent young women (depending on the local demographics).



EYW's programme strategy was centred on achieving **three interrelated long-term outcomes (LTO)**:

- **Building youth agency (LTO1)** by supporting youth to organise and network themselves and by collaborating with (private and public) training and education facilities to develop youth's (soft, technical and entrepreneurial) skills for making professional life choices and seizing economic opportunities;
- **Creating economic opportunities for youth (LTO2)** by enhancing their access to decent jobs and business markets (incl. credit), and supporting and strengthening the (climate) resilience of their start-ups; and
- **Creating an enabling environment for youth (LTO3)** by influencing policies and social norms affecting youth agency and opportunities through youth-led advocacy, campaigning and community-based action around gendered household roles, violence against women and girls (VAWG) and other gendered barriers to young women's and men's empowerment.

Within this broad programme strategy, interventions on the ground were tailored to the specific contexts, capacities and needs in the targeted regions, leveraging existing partnerships and including young people as co-designers and co-implementers of the chosen interventions.

EYW chose to use and pilot-test a human-centred and holistic approach to drive youth's socioeconomic empowerment in fairly difficult circumstances characterised by extreme remoteness, climate vulnerability and thin markets, exaggerated by the global pandemic and national regime and policy shifts.

# About the Evaluation

## Evaluation objectives

The evaluation assessed the programme's contribution to programme outcomes and their sustainability and synergy at the end of the programme. Its objectives and guiding questions were the following:

Objectives	Guiding questions
1. <b>Assess programme outcomes and their likely sustainability relative to context</b>	<i>What can be concluded about the effectiveness of the programme interventions in the three outcome areas? Were there any unintended (positive or negative) outcomes? How likely will positive outcomes sustain and scale, and what are the key factors and risks that affect this?.</i>
2. <b>Assess the synergy and impact of these outcomes on youth empowerment</b>	<i>How and where has EYW contributed to the socio-economic empowerment of young women and men in terms of their ability to effectively seize opportunities and grow their influence and capital?</i>
3. <b>Compare findings and draw lessons for future youth empowerment programming</b>	<i>What were the major constraints to achieving sustainable change in the four countries, requiring further support or attention to enhance the likelihood that positive changes can sustain and go to scale? What lessons can we draw from the four countries and what recommendations can we make for future programming?</i>

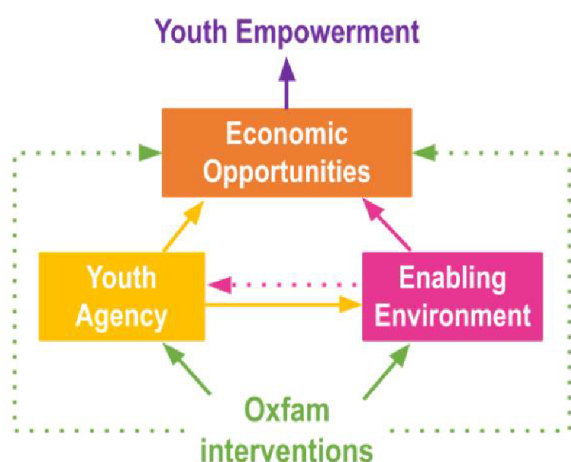
Oxfam and IKEA Foundation specifically requested the evaluation to be intentionally **utilisation and learning focused**. The evaluation was expected to take an **inclusive and participatory approach that would meaningfully engage youth** in the evaluation and stimulate their learning and reflection together with the programme teams within and across the countries.

Youth from across the four countries were selected in consultation with the Oxfam country teams to **participate in evaluation design, facilitation of participatory inquiries with youth, and sensemaking**. There were **9 Youth Critical Friends** in Indonesia, 8 in Pakistan, 8 in Bangladesh, and 4 in Ethiopia. Electoral tensions made it impossible to engage more Ethiopian youth.

As the entire evaluation was conducted against the backdrop of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it required the evaluation team to adopt a highly flexible approach in an ever changing context.

## First phase evaluation focusing and framing

For the purpose of the evaluation, EYW's existing Theory of Change (ToC) was enhanced into an **evaluative tool** by including causal links and assumptions which surfaced from the desk review and stakeholders interviewed during inception. The evaluative ToC (see below) shows the **three programme components or outcome areas** in which the project sought to achieve results (building youth agency, creating economic opportunities, and shaping the enabling environment) as well as the three main evaluation hypotheses. The evaluation was to cover **all components (and actors in these components) plus the impact area (your empowerment)** in three locations in Indonesia (two on Sulawesi and one on Java) and two locations in each of the other three countries (one per region). The locations were selected purposively for their learning value **together with the Youth Critical Friends in consultation with the youth in their Youth Hubs**.



Assumptions:

- If youth have agency, then they are able to seize and create opportunities and advocate for more support from their families, communities and government.
- A conducive environment with more supportive norms and policies reinforce youth's agency.
- Synergies between 'agency', 'opportunities' and 'environment' are essential to empower youth for work and impact on their ability to effectively make conscious choices about their livelihood.

Based on the evaluative ToC and the input from the desk review and consultations, **decisions regarding primary research focus and methods were made with the programme teams and Youth Critical Friends through an online (due to Covid restrictions) design workshop.** The Youth Critical Friends were unanimously positive about the proposed evaluation approach.

### Second phase data collection and linking

The end-of-term evaluation's primary data collection focused primarily on the evidence gaps and weaknesses in the available secondary evidence base.

Data collection was turned into **empowering learning moments** by choosing **participatory methods that draw on group-based scoring and visual diagnostics methods**, such as Constituent Voice (CV) and Causal Flow Mapping (CFM) tools, complemented with Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). **Youth Critical Friends were instrumental in mobilising youth participants for the field inquiries.**

The following data collection activities were conducted in the selected locations in each countries, purposely selected for their learning value (the insights they could generate about the validity, feasibility and sustainability of the EYW Theory of Change in different contexts).

- In-country **gender-disaggregated FGDs** with youth involved in EYW activities **using CV**
- In-country **mixed FGDs** with community members and youth **using CFM** to explain/crosscheck findings from the secondary data
- In-country group KIIs **using CV** with
  - Youth leaders, innovators, networkers and participants in the advisory board / national youth council members
  - Local Service Providers (incl. market brokers, credit providers, employers)
  - District and village-level government
- In-country Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs) with Oxfam and local partners

In addition, global-level Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI) were organised with the donor and with EYW technical advisors, managers, campaigners and influencers to substantiate findings from the cross-country analysis.

### Third phase sensemaking and reporting

**Within each country, an in-person 2-day Participatory Sensemaking workshop was organised with Youth Critical Friends, Oxfam and partner staff, government representatives and representatives from local service providers.**

In addition, a **global-level participatory sensemaking workshop** was organised through Zoom (due to Covid restrictions) which included **Youth Critical Friends, Oxfam and partner staff and donor representatives**.

The online environment was less than ideal for meaningful engagement with youth as it often created an unequal power dynamic due to limitations of digital access, language and time to participate virtually. In an attempt to counterbalance this, we specifically gave Youth Critical Friends the opportunity **to speak first on each topic**.

The Youth Critical Friends considered their engagement in evaluative discussions and sensemaking quite beneficial to learn about the experiences of their peers and the programme as a whole.

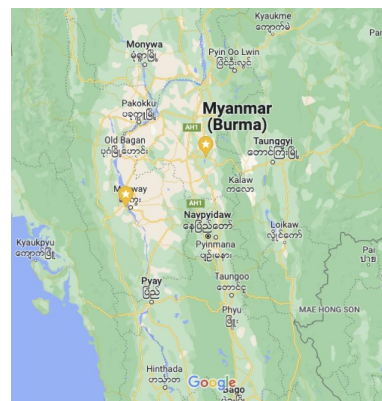
At the end of the evaluation, a **12-page infographic booklet** was developed to distribute findings from the evaluation to a wider audience. The booklet contains the main outcomes and evaluation findings for each country supported by quotes and impact stories accessible through a QR code. The booklet is specifically also **meant to be used by local partners and youth** to advance future youth empowerment programming. **Youth Critical Friends were consulted about the design of the booklet**.

# LOCAL INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE FOR RESILIENCE IN MYANMAR

*Evaluation of the effectiveness and sustainability of citizen membership organisations for building resilience in the Dry Zone area 18 months after project closure*

## About the Project

The “Building equitable and resilient livelihoods in the Dry Zone” project (or DZ project) aimed at building strong and viable **citizen Membership Organisations (MOs)** capable of organising community members, lobbying township departments and parliament, establishing business relationships with traders and suppliers, and developing civil society networks with local NGOs and MOs of other villages, in order to create sustainable livelihood opportunities and build resilience against climate-related hazards. The main proposition of the project was that the MO model could lay the foundation for developing more sustainable livelihoods and build resilience in the communities who struggle with the extreme climatological and environmental conditions in the Dry Zone.<sup>1</sup>



The MO concept was developed and piloted over a period of 3 years (2011-2014) by Oxfam in collaboration with the local partner Network Activities Group (NAG) in **64 communities in Minbu and Thazi townships** (see map). The total budget spent was US\$ 2,229,040 (or average almost US\$ 770K per year).

The MO was quite unique to the Burmese institutional landscape. It was fundamentally different from other village institutions or traditional farmer organisations in its role of facilitator of people’s participation and voice in local governance and its wider scope of development efforts and community-level action focused on improving livelihoods and resilience. As a result it generally gained much wider village participation compared to other local development institutions, indicating its relevance and importance.

## About the Evaluation

### Evaluation objectives and uses

The evaluation assessed MO effectiveness and sustainability, and the impact on livelihoods and climate resilience in the **64 MO communities** 18-20 months after project completion. Its objectives and expected uses were the following:

Objectives	Purposes / Uses
1. Verify to what extent MOs still exist and function 18-20 months after project closure, and what Oxfam’s contributions have been	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Oxfam senior management</b> sought to use the evidence and report for internal and external accountability purposes, globally and in Myanmar.</li> </ul>

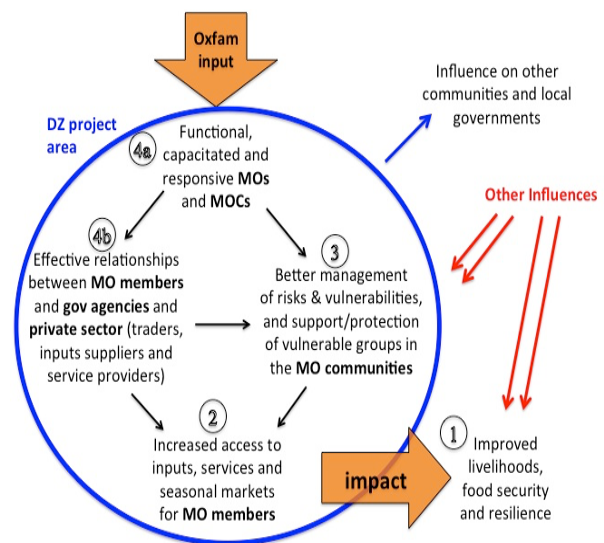
<sup>1</sup> The Dry Zone is an area that spans from lower Sagaing region to the western and central parts of Mandalay region and most of Magway region, where approximately one-quarter of the country’s population is living. Situated in the shadow of the Rakhine mountain range, the land is very dry and heavily affected by climate change.

<p>2. Learn about the conditions and mechanisms that affect MO effectiveness and sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>project partners (Oxfam and NAG) and funders (LIFT) in Myanmar</b> sought to learn what was required to improve, sustain and replicate the MO success.</li> <li>• The <b>Thazi and Minbu township governments</b> wanted to learn more about how to support the MOs to make their townships more climate resilient.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Develop and employ a participatory approach to understand and support 'governance and voice' work and build local capacity in using this approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>project partners (Oxfam and NAG) in Myanmar</b> wanted to learn about PIALA and engage and build capacity of <b>leading MO members</b> in using the participatory methods and tools for ongoing self assessment and movement building</li> </ul>

## First phase evaluation focusing and framing

An evaluative Theory of Change (ToC) was created through a participatory outcome mapping exercise with Oxfam staff and partners at the start of the first phase. The diagram on the right presents the ToC, showing the **three components** in which the project sought to achieve results:

- **MO capacity and governance (result area 4a)**, incl. membership, leadership, operations and coalition building);
- **MO relationships (result area 4b)**, in particular with township government and private sector actors (traders, inputs suppliers and loan and other service providers); and
- **Community risk & vulnerability management (result area 3)**, incl. protection of vulnerable groups in the MO communities.



The main hypotheses was that, by developing functional, capacitated and responsive MOs with strong MO leadership (called MO Committees or MOCs), behavioural changes would be triggered in a set of key stakeholder relationships and mechanisms that would render greater access to inputs, services and seasonal markets for the MO communities (**results area 2**), resulting in improved and more sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience (**results area 1**). Successful MOs would then inspire and influence other communities to also develop MOs and motivate local governments to enhance their support.

To meet the first two evaluation objectives, the evaluation was expected to cover **all project components (and actors in these components)** and **all results areas** in a representative sample of MO communities. To enable the representative sampling of MOs, a classification needed to be built. A rubrics-based self assessment was conducted by all MOCs during the first phase of the evaluation with facilitation support from Oxfam and the external evaluator, using a tool that had been used for ongoing monitoring and was adapted for the evaluation. The self assessments engaged 413 MO community members from 62 MO communities (36% women and 64% men).<sup>2</sup> Comparing the assessment results, it was concluded that there were:

- **0 effective MOs**, where the MO membership, leadership, operations and coalition building are fully functional and effective;
- **12 maturing MOs**, where the MO membership, leadership, operations and coalition building are on the way to become fully functional and effective;

<sup>2</sup> In 2 MO villages, it was impossible to conduct the self-assessment due to conflict.



- **41 hopeful MOs**, where the MO membership, leadership, operations and coalition building have a reasonable chance of becoming fully functional and effective;
- **7 dysfunctional MOs**, where the MO membership, leadership, operations and coalition building are not working well.

To meet the third evaluation objective, it was decided to **engage local people from the two project townships as co-researchers**. A team of 15 local researchers was composed with highly motivated MO members of the leadership committees (i.e. the MOCs) and few former local Oxfam/NAG staff. The local researchers were very eager and motivated to learn, both about the DZ project (e.g. "what is left", "how MOs are doing in other villages", "understand why") and about participatory inquiry (e.g. "harmonised questions", "engage people"). To avoid research and respondent bias, the evaluative inquiries in Minbu were conducted by the team members from Thazi, and those Thazi were conducted by team members from Minbu.

## Second phase data collection and linking

The **co-research team** was trained in the PIALA approach and worked together on a detailed design and pilot tested the methods and tools during a week on-site workshop in a Buddhist monastery in Thazi. Most of these researchers had never done any research before, so their data sometimes lacked some depth and detail, and they required more coaching and guidance. However, the MO members turned out to be outstanding facilitators of group-based diagnostics in Participatory Statistics processes, much better than their Oxfam and NAG colleagues. They understood the local contexts and power dynamics, were excellent listeners and learners, were also very sensitive and responsive to participants' needs and concerns, and treated their peers with the greatest respect. The reliability of the data collected therefore was much higher than originally expected.

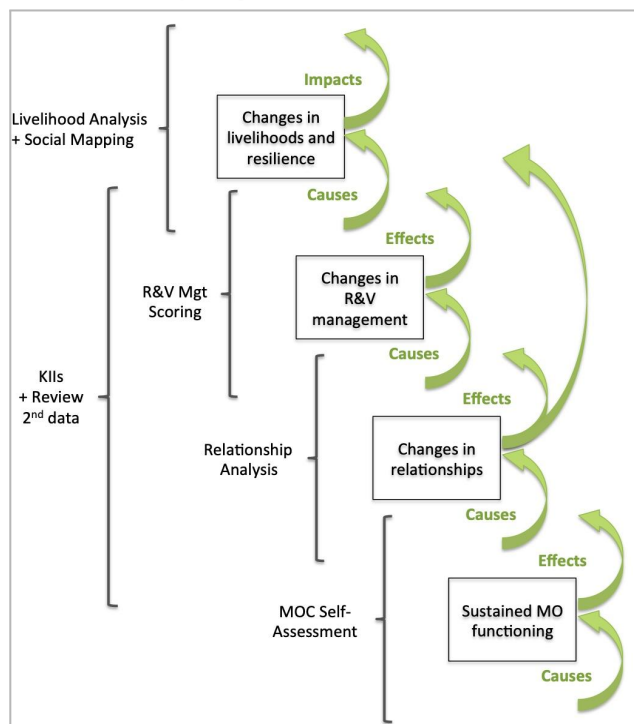
For the in-depth evaluation inquiries in the second evaluation phase, **21 MO communities (12 in Thazi and 9 in Minbu) were selected proportionally** from the above four categories, also taking into account the variability in MO environment and climatological hazards, and ensuring the sample had sufficient **embedded configurational counterfactuals** (comparative conditions and elements of MO functioning that were not in place in some MO communities).

Data was then collected in these 21 villages using a quasi-standardized set of **Participatory Statistics methods in gender-specific focus groups** that engaged **1302 quasi-randomly selected people (44% women and 56% men)**. The figure on the right shows how the methods were chosen to inquire the causal claim of the project's Theory of Change, and how they **overlapped and complemented** each other to permit cross-checking and testing of hypotheses.

## Third phase sensemaking

Given the political context in Myanmar, the limited available resources and capabilities, and the nature of the project being an innovation initiative that was piloted at the local level in two townships, it was decided to organise a **2-day sensemaking local workshop** in Magway (near Minbu) with **60 participants, which included:**

*Participatory Statistics methods*



- MO members and leaders (35%)
- National and local township officials and PMs (25%)
- International and local Oxfam and NAG staff (15%)
- LIFT and other interested international organisations and donors (15%)
- Facilitators, interpreters and logistics managers (10%)

The workshop was co-designed and co-facilitated with the local partner NAG, and organised at a local Buddhist monastery. The monastery offered a safe place to have open discussions on an equal basis. The monks were the hosts and provided the venue, catering, logistics and sleeping arrangements.

The workshop was a huge success in that it had never happened before that officials from national and local governments had come down to a village monastery to sit down with local villagers and discuss findings and solutions for the problems that communities face in the Dry Zone. Never before had local villagers been given the opportunity to debate with officials, and never before had officials explained to villagers all the constraints and difficulties they face in the national and local government administration to get the communities the services and support they need.





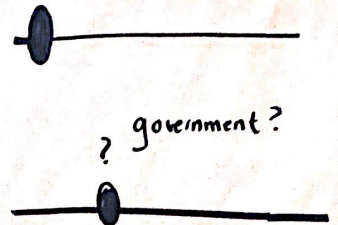
# TEAM 2

Inclusive Governance  
in Myanmar

## PHASE 1 : Focusing & Framing

Scope: 64 villages

Engagement in design : engage local ppl. as co-researchers.  
~~64 villages~~

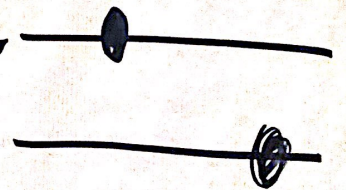


## PHASE 2 : Collecting and linking data.

Mixed processes: Particip. statistics.

Sampling of/within systems.

How much direct use of analysis for participants?   
↳ sensemaking?   
Trade-off?



Did some sensemaking already happen before?

## PHASE 3 : Analysing and making sense of evidence.

Engagement in analysis and sensemaking

: 60 participants.  
↳ legitimacy?  
Representativeness?





# TEAM 3

Inclusive Governance  
in Myanmar

## Phase 1

2 scope

all actors + components —●— few actors + components

3 engagement in design

all users —●— experts only

## Phase 2

6 participatory process

—●— extrachic process

7 purposive sampling

—●— random sampling

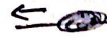
# TEAM 1

Empowering Youth  
for Work (EYW)

## 1. framing

system actors + components

all



few

potential users

pot. users



experts

## 2. collecting

intended processes

part. proc.



extn. proc.

sampling of/within  
system

purposive  
sampling +  
snowballing



random sample

## 3. Analysis

Engagement in analysis

+ stakehol.



expert. only