

Oxfam America's Annual Impact Reflection

A participatory process for joint sense-making and planning

The Annual Impact Reflection (AIR) is a process that is designed to facilitate collaborative knowledge sharing and joint data analysis amongst multiple stakeholders working in international development program coalitions. What makes the AIR unique is the use of monitoring and evaluation data (evidence) within a multi-stakeholder sense-making process as well as its focus on creating an equal space among stakeholders to discuss progress towards agreed-upon impact domains.

The purpose of an AIR is:

- To create an equal space, between program staff, partners, allies and primary change agents each year, for an honest discussion about program successes and failures
- To jointly understand program monitoring data and the findings of externally commissioned evaluative research
- To produce a report that informs external stakeholders about program progress towards impact and also highlight recommendations for action. The report therefore is an integral part of Oxfam America's internal accountability and learning
- The AIR, and the report produced as a result, seek to address:
 - the changes in outcomes that the program is contributing to
 - what has changed for the primary change agents and how the change is perceived
 - lessons learned from past year
 - suggested adjustments to our implementation based on the reflection

While Oxfam America doesn't have a set methodology for carrying out an AIR process, there are recommendations around the elements to include within the process, these include:

- Critical reflection; including joint analysis, interpretation and consensus building among program stakeholders
- Participation of primary change agents, to bring in their unique perspectives
- Fostering learning across various work streams through systemic analysis of progress towards intended results, both at the project level, as well as towards impact domain
- Explicit reflection on findings from multiple sources: external research, monitoring data, etc...
- Sharing of findings and conclusions with relevant constituents, especially external actors.

The best process for annual impact reflections and reports is context-driven. It is very possible that two programs operating in the same country will have different processes. Who participates, the complexity of the data being reviewed, the time and resources available, the existence of good facilitation, the nature of partner relations all influence the process. Oxfam believes that field staff are best placed to determine and design the process themselves in consultation with the program's partners.

Some of the process considerations include:

- Reflection, by its nature, is a face-to-face process, hence no AIR can be done by email or with participants connecting remotely.
- Preparation is key: this includes organizing and analyzing data ahead of time
- For maximizing reflection and learning, a minimum of one day should be planned, and a two-day event is needed if we truly wish to allow people the space to challenge one another and develop authentic consensus.

The AIR's introduction within Oxfam has opened space to look into the opportunities and challenges associated with carrying such a participatory process among our stakeholders. The organization is working with the process, especially around examining some key questions that emerge out of this process. These questions are essential to our organizational commitment to building more robust knowledge sharing systems, internally and externally, as well as strengthening the feedback loops among our stakeholders.

Visual representation of themes relevant for AIR

