Trōcaire

Evaluation Report – Management Response

Strategy and Impact Unit

December 2013

Version 0.3

Title of Programme / Project:Strengthening Evidence Based Approaches to reducing women's vulnerability to HIV

Country: Malawi

Programme Implementation Period: 2011 - 2015

Type of Evaluation: Final
Date of Evaluation: Concluded and Report Approved October 2016

Evaluation Team: NUIG, Kerena Consulting and Reach Trust

Programme Manager (prepares):   **Date: 25/11/16**

Country Director (approves):   **Date: 7ᵗʰ December 2016**

Head of Region (approves if no PM):   **Date:**

1. **Please comment briefly on the evaluation process and overall quality of the evaluation report.**
    What were the particular reasons for doing the evaluation at this time? Was it for internal or external purposes? Are you happy with the overall quality of the evaluation report? If not, why not?

    > The evaluation was longitudinal in nature and comprised of a quantitative baseline and endline led by the National University of Ireland – Galway and three rounds of qualitative research led by Dr Fiona O'Reilly. Both the qualitative and quantitative components were supported by Reach Trust who led on data collection, cleaning, coding and analysis.
    >
    > The evaluation may be used for both internal and external sharing and learning.
    >
    > Overall we are happy with the rigor of the evaluation report. However it is a lengthy document and is undergoing substantial edit and synthesising into a more user friendly document.

2. **Please comment on the specific conclusions made in evaluation report.**
    Do you agree or disagree with the conclusions (if not, why not?)

    > The following recommendations (in bolded italics) were made and our comments follow these:
    >
    > ***Gender equality and HIV risk reduction strategies in patriarchal contexts may not always be compatible***
    > The evidence from both the qualitative and quantitative research suggests a dissonance between the efforts to reduce risk to vulnerability through modification to sexual attitudes and norms and efforts to improve gender equality within a context in which women's sexual availability is thought to be ensured through marriage (and a man's conjugal rights). In this context enhancing women's

rights to sexual autonomy, as well as to their autonomy in other areas, may not be seen as realistic, or indeed desirable by the target groups.

Based on this recommendation we have undertaken a further systematic review of the STAR and motivator approach, this has reccomended a move to the SASA Faith Approch which more systematically challenges underlying power dynamics which support gender inequality: This also reflects the shift within Trocaire to a greater focus on GBV.

The expectations of 'success' and what counts as success requires moderation
The quantitative findings suggest modest success in relation to some findings, such as the reduction in stigmatising attitudes, while in others there is a measured deterioration of attitudes (e.g. gender equitable norms deteriorated in two intervention sites). These findings do not meet the expectations set out after the baseline in terms of measuring success and call into question, what we set as targets for success and how we measure it. As discussed previously, the expectation of significant and sustained change as a result of a time-limited intervention may not be realistic.

This conclusion is accepted and adopted. More realistic targets will be set for the next phahse of programming. The adoption of the SASA! Faith methodology will in part support this process as the methodology clearly outline what changes can be expected for each phase of the methodology. Futhermore programme implementation and move to the next phase of programming is expected to happen only once the set target have been achieved.

Evolving programmes challenge attribution of change to specific activities and interventions
The evolution of the Partner strategies in each area into multi-faceted approaches makes it very difficult to attribute impact to specific strategies or combinations of these.

This conclusion is accepted and we have now moved to a more standardised approach for partner strategies which are more uniform as compared to the previous programme.

Qualitative and quantitative findings measure different types of change and may not always co-align
Differences were found in qualitative and quantitative analysis in relation to gender equality. However, qualitative and quantitative analysis may not reflect on the same units of measurement, with qualitative research aimed at understanding the participant's point of view rather than assessing facts from a more distant and objective viewpoint.

This conclusion is noted and we will continue to triangulate data using qualitative and quantitative methods and different methods of collection.

Over-time, the reported benefits of VSLs may become risks for some borrowers
The qualitative data in particular picked up on a trend in which a minority of participants felt that over-time the VSLs could have negative consequences for those who were unable to meet repayments resulting in repossessions, the threat of repossessions or the possibility of engaging in transactional sex to meet repayments..

Unfortunately this conclusion appears to be validated in many VSL's within the new Gender programme and also within VSL's under our livelihoods programme. The humanitarian situation appears to be impacting on many group members ability to purchase shares and correspondingly take loans. Where loans are available they are often too small to invest in anything other than basic household needs. As a result of this we have initiated a 'VSL Health check survey' across all VSL groups and will be able to provide more analysis and reccomendations on how to adjust this strategy in early 2017.

3. **Please comment on the recommendations made in the report.**

   How they will be implemented and how this will enhance programme/project quality? If recommendations are not being accepted please indicate why this is so, and what alternative actions are being taken.

The following recommendations (in italics) were made and our comments are as follows:

At a community level work with changes that are ripe or already occurring
Working against very strong norms and practices is likely to result in a) resistance, or b) the conversion, on the ground, of efforts to support existing norms and practices.
Trocaire will endeavour to build on changes already occurring but we also feel the need to address Human rights violations and GBV, and we need to work to address these where they occur, in addition to finding the best methodology to do so. In practise we are frequently directed (by the DECC) to the most underserved communities where changes have not been initiated. Working in areas where change is already occurring also makes attribution very challenging and goes against the nature of our programming which is to target the most underserved communities.

Be context sensitive
Communities develop and change in different ways but also within the larger context of societal change. Programmes need to be sensitive to the myriad unintended consequences of interventions.

This is already embedded within our programming which links micro level work within communities up to the macro level work on policy which in turn impacts on much broader societal change.

Temper programme expectations about transformative change in social or cultural norms
Real normative change is a process that may be better expected to occur over decades or even over generations. Such changes are also likely to require societal shifts that are beyond the scope of community interventions. Nevertheless, small changes in attitudes and norms are possible, as are some behavioural changes within communities. For sustainable normative change, however, it may be necessary to focus efforts at the national or regional level, such as through working with policy-makers and legislators to, for instance, change laws on early marriage, gender equality, and women's rights in marriage etc.

We have adopted this recommendation and will take a more cautious approach to formulating targets as a consequence. As we move to integrated programming (with livelihoods and access to

resources) in Machinga district we also believe this holistic approach will produce greater levels of transformative change. Work at the national level in relation to advocacy has also been enhanced.

Evaluation research should prioritise doing no harm
Both donors and NGO programme practitioners want to establish that change can be attributed to the funded interventions and evaluation research is the preferred tool. However in social settings it is critical that design of evaluation research prioritise doing no harm to participants and be sensitive to identifying unintended consequences, which in fact is the more valuable indication of the deeper dynamics in such settings.

This is part of our evaluation policy and has been carried forward into the next programme.

Build on successes by integrating the most effective components of a variety of intervention approaches
While deep and significant normative change across communities was not seen, the findings from this study suggest that smaller changes are possible. While community-based interventions appeared to be most effective at supporting normative change, albeit slowly, the focused interventions appeared most successful at supporting behavioural change – in particular by engaging with authority figures and leaders in the community who are able to issue directives and spread knowledge regarding acceptable/unacceptable behaviour.

This recommendation has been adopted and we have also undertaken a further independent review of the STAR and motivator methodology. Based on this we are recommending a move to the SASA Faith metholdology which is far more rigorous, actively engages communities and authority figures and will produce deeper more transformative change.

Close the gap in perspective between Trócaire and partners
It is imperative that all partners/stakeholders have a clear understanding of the purpose and objectives of the programme and the research element. In terms of the programme the local partners responsible for the day to day development and implementation were subject to many of the same social and cultural norms as programme participants, some of which were the target for change by the programme. There was an assumption that after brief training, programme partners and Trócaire regarded complex cultural and social phenomena similarly.

Based on this recommendation we have undertaken an assessment of partners attitudes and practises and knowledge in relation to gender and socio cultural factors. The results will be shared with HDF in the near future. Furthermore the SASA! Faith methodology requires a start phase where Trocaire's and partners' staff are trained and go through a personal change process. This should ensure that both Trocaire's and partner's staff develop a similar understanding of power and its implication for GBV.

4. How will the evaluation influence the future direction of this programme/project.

The evaluation has substantially influenced the redesign of the approved HDF programme. Whilst work is ongoing our ultimate recommendation is a move to the SASA Faith! Approach further details will be provided including our proposal for re-design in the next few weeks.

5. **Please outline any key learnings from this evaluation process which could be shared with other programmes/countries**

All of the conclusion and recommendations are relevant for other programmes and countries and we will continue sharing the results internally and externally. The final evaluation report is currently being synthesised into shorter versions geared to a range of audiences. This will enable the findings to be shared more effectively across Trocaire implementation countries, in addition to a broader range of stakeholders.

6. *If an external consultant led this evaluation process, please indicate whether you would* **recommend including this consultant in Trócaire's database of recommended consultants.** *Please include your reasons for recommending or for not recommending the consultant below.*

Yes. NUIG, Kerena Consulting and Reach Trust performed well and produced the desired reports. However a recommendation would be to reduce the number of consulting agencies involved as the 3 way process of information sharing, analysis and report writing did result in substantial delays in receiving the final report.