

# **Impact evaluation of the advocacy work on the topic of Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel**

**Final report**



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## Executive summary

See overall summary report

## List of Abbreviations

<b>A&amp;L</b>	Advocacy and Lobby
<b>BDS</b>	Boycott Divestment Sanctions
<b>CALL/RvV</b>	Council for Alien Law Litigation/ Raad voor Vreemdelingenbetwistingen
<b>CNCD</b>	Centre national de <a href="#">coopération au développement</a>
<b>CGRS/ CGVS</b>	Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons / Commissariaat-generaal voor de Vluchtelingen en de Staatlozen
<b>COHAFA</b>	Council working party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DBIO</b>	Don't Buy Into Occupation
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EEAS</b>	European External Action Service
<b>ECHO</b>	European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department
<b>GISHA</b>	NGO Legal Center for Freedom of Movement
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>NEAR</b>	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
<b>NGA</b>	Niet Gouvernementele Actoren (non-governmental actors)
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>OPTI</b>	Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel
<b>RIC</b>	Rights in Crisis
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>WBPC</b>	Westbank Protection Consortium
<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

- <sup>1</sup> This report describes the findings of the evaluation:
  - the lobby and advocacy on the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel (OPTI), implemented by the Belgian NGO OxfamSolidariteit. The evaluation was executed ACE Europe in the period February-March 2022.
- <sup>2</sup> The evaluation is aligned with other ongoing evaluations, more in particular the overall impact evaluation of the topic on fiscal justice and the the policy influencing work of 11.11.11. in the domains of climate justice, migration and ODA. Findings of this evaluation will feed into overall analysis of the impact of policy influencing work of Belgian CSOs.
- <sup>3</sup> **Subject** of the impact evaluation is policy influencing work of Oxfam Solidariteit with regards to OPTI between 2017 and 2021 in the Belgian context. This will also entail attention for the alignment between the policy influencing work of Oxfam Solidariteit, Other Oxfam affiliates, Oxfam confederation, Oxfam country offices, Oxfam partners in the Global South).
- <sup>4</sup> The **objectives** of the evaluation are two: (see TOR)
  - (1) **Accountability** – measuring impact will enable Oxfam SolidariteitOxfam Solidariteit to account to DGD for the results achieved, including results at impact level. The evaluation should provide information on the OECD/DAC criteria and on the indicators as formulated in the multi-annual plan.
  - (2) **Learning** – the final evaluation needs to document lessons learned and formulate recommendations to inform the reflection process regarding the future vision and strategic decisions regarding policy influencing. These will inform the execution of the next multi-annual programme for policy influencing.
- <sup>5</sup> Based on the ToR it is understood by the consultants that the evaluation does not only focuses on measuring the level of **impact** but also addresses other DAC evaluation criteria such as **effectiveness, relevance, efficiency**.

## 1.1 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH OF THE EVALUATION

- <sup>6</sup> The evaluation started with a ToC, reconstructed in a participatory workshop with Oxfam Solidariteit. This clarified the relations between the programme and the advocacy targets and how these actors interact. It allowed to identify assumptions, to identify the most relevant respondents.
- <sup>7</sup> A timeline exercise with the team and on the basis of documents highlighted a number of changes realised. A number of cases were identified to focus on.
- <sup>8</sup> To allow a contribution analysis for these outcomes (or cases to study), the evaluators used a narrative approach, inviting the lobbyists to reconstruct the line of the events from their perspective. This provided a basis to document the story of change which was further triangulated through interviews with policy makers and study of the policy documents.



- <sup>9</sup> Data-collection provided the basis for a contribution analysis giving specific attention to mechanisms of change and assumptions underlying the stories of change.
- <sup>10</sup> Key informant interviews were organised with a number of Oxfam Affiliates in The Netherlands, Germany and the OPTI.

*Table 1: Sample size for the qualitative interviews*

	Direct contacts parliaments <sup>1</sup>	Direct contacts cabinets	Direct contacts administration	Journalist	Oxfam confederation	Others (mainly civil society)
<b>Final evaluation:</b> interviews executed	2	2	1	1	3	5

## 1.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATIONS

- <sup>11</sup> It was difficult for the topic of Israel-Palestine to pinpoint a specific milestone/change at the level of decision makers to which Oxfam contributed directly, which is often the case in less technical advocacy work. Oxfam argues that changes have been influenced thanks to continuous provision of information and sees that influence is often based on actions dating from some years back and on a combination of actions involving also other actors. This made it difficult to apply the method of contribution analysis.
- <sup>12</sup> The position for lobby on OPTI was not filled for a period of 7 nine months (from November 2020). The previous officer was little available for supplying the performance stories with details; a brief exchange with the former lobby officer provided some additional information but was not sufficient to have all the details in place. The Excel contact and product tracker for OPTI started in 2018 which made it difficult to get detailed information on outputs in the earlier years.
- <sup>13</sup> The evaluator was not able to get interviews with all targets planned for. An interview was not possible with the official of DGD working on humanitarian assistance (maternity leave), another respondent from DGD (Claire Terlinden, on sick leave replaced by Nora Loozen) did not respond to the request for an interview. See also list of respondents that was shared.

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<sup>1</sup> This group includes members of parliament and parliamentary collaborators.

## 2 DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT

### 2.1 POLICY CONTEXT AT THE START OF THE PROGRAMME OPTI 2017- 2021

- <sup>14</sup> **General position of stakeholders in Belgium** - The policy context at the start of the programme in 2017 was described in a baseline study related to the impact of the policy work of 11.11.11. and Broederlijk Delen<sup>2</sup>. In the points below, the evaluators highlight specific contextual elements that are relevant for the Oxfam policy work ensuring a brief update for after 2018 (when the impact baseline study was finalised).
- <sup>15</sup> The conflict is very much alive in Belgium, both among policymakers and civil society organisations. Through the 11.11.11 umbrella organisation, Belgian NGOs have been striving for many years for a change that would give the peace process and the two-state solution a chance. However, the situation is not improving and reality on the ground shaped by the Israeli settlement enterprise fracturing Palestinian territory and dividing communities, backed by the decision of the then President of the United States Donald Trump at the end of 2017 to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel makes the 2-state solution almost impossible to achieve. It unilaterally ended the international consensus not to recognise Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem. Overall, a stakeholder fatigue vis-à-vis this protracted crisis can be observed. There is a very present Israeli counter-lobby whose strategy is one of intimidation and discrediting of organisations and their employees. This has been the case, for example, for BD and Oxfam Solidariteit.
- <sup>16</sup> The opposition parties and part of civil society in Belgium consider that the time for dialogue and the diplomatic approach is actually over. They argue, for example, for the recognition of Palestine as a state and for the introduction of clear sanctions (instead of incentives).
- <sup>17</sup> Central to the approach of Belgian government with regards to the conflict are the following characteristics: maintaining dialogue (both with Israel and with the Palestinian Authority) and maintaining a position as a progressive but also constructive voice vis-à-vis other European Member States. Belgium has been playing a pioneering role in the debate for some years now and uses international forums to express its position (e.g. in the UN Human Rights Council). Within the EU, Belgium is seen as a progressive and outspoken voice that always bases its position on respect for international law and human rights, one of the spearheads of the current Belgian policy. Since every voice counts within the EU, Belgium can play an important role. The Belgian position is consistently prepared and expressed jointly by the diplomacy/administration. The cabinet of the Minister of foreign affairs works very closely with the Middle East desk of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the representation of Belgium at the European Union. Since 2015 however, it became increasingly difficult to find a strong consensus in the EU on OPTI issues, such as demolitions and differentiation and so-called blocker member states (such as Hungary) appeared and tightened their link to Israel.
- <sup>18</sup> **Policy notes** - The policy note of Minister Reynders, responsible for Foreign Affairs at the beginning of Oxfam's programme (October 2017, page 19) underlines several points of attention regarding Israel and Palestine: *'Daarnaast zal België het kolonisatiebeleid en de vernietiging van humanitaire projecten in de gebieden alsook het geweld door beide partijen blijven veroordelen en anderzijds de initiatieven die een*

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<sup>2</sup> ACE Europe – HIVA KULeuven (oktober 2018) IMPACT EVALUATIE VAN DE BELEIDSBEÏNVLOEDING DOOR 11.11.11 OP DE THEMA'S MIGRATIE, MIDDEN-OOSTEN EN ONTWIKKELINGSFINANCIERING. FINALE VERSIE BASELINE RAPPORT

*verzoening van de gemeenschappen nastreven, steunen. Ons land zal ook ijveren voor een actievere rol van de EU.'*

- <sup>19</sup> The period of federal elections in 2020 and the new government starting up in 2021 caused a slow down in lobby opportunities. But the policy notes show that the Belgian government remains on its position with a more clear engagement though with regards the differentiation policy (see further).
- <sup>20</sup> The coalition agreement of September 2020 stated the following: "De regering zet verdere stappen inzake een bilateraal en multilateraal differentiatiebeleid ten opzichte van de Israëlische nederzettingen. (...) De regering zal op multilateraal en EU-vlak, of desgevallend met een significante groep gelijkgezinde staten, werken aan een lijst van effectieve en proportionele tegenmaatregelen ingeval van een Israëlische annexatie van Palestijns gebied en aan de mogelijke en tijdige erkenning van de Palestijnse staat"
- <sup>21</sup> The policy note of the Minister of Economic Affairs, Minister Dermagne, (October, 29th 2021, page 24) indicates that with regards to the Association agreement between the EU and Israel specific hindrances for the execution of the differentiation policy were analysed and that the administration was tasked with the concretisation of next steps.
- <sup>22</sup> The policy note of the Minister for Development Cooperation, Minister Kitir (October 29th 2021, page 18), refers to Palestine under the new bilateral cooperation programme executed by Enabel (with specific attention to youth) and to her support for multilateral programmes (for e.g. FAO, including Gaza).
- <sup>23</sup> The policy note of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister Wilmès (November 5th 2020<sup>3</sup>) repeats the engagement of the previous years: 'In overeenstemming met de Europese wetgeving en het internationaal recht zal België het differentiatiebeleid blijven uitvoeren. België zal geen enkele annexatie van Palestijns grondgebied erkennen en zal te gepasten tijde de erkenning van de Palestijnse staat overwegen, in overleg met zijn Europese partners. België zal de Palestijnse Autoriteit blijven vragen om haar democratische legitimiteit te versterken via geloofwaardige en inclusieve verkiezingen op basis van het respect voor de democratische waarden en de rechtsstaat.'
- <sup>24</sup> **Topics** - In general, it is clear that the situation in OPTI itself is further deteriorating when looking at the various lobby issues that are key for OPTI, such as differentiation policy, annexation policies, agreement between the EU and Israel, civil society and the blockade of Gaza.
- **Differentiation policy** - The pan-European think tank European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) launched the term "differentiation" to describe various measures by which the EU and European Member States exclude settlement entities and activities from bilateral relations with Israel, making clear that they recognise Israel only within the 1967 borders. The ECFR points out that such a policy is only the concrete implementation of existing European rules. The first such differentiation measure implemented by the EU was the publication of European guidelines (July 2013) excluding settlements from European funding mechanisms. This was confirmed by the UN Resolution 2334 (December 2016) aiming at installing a practical manner to address *de facto* annexation and a referred to in a Resolution in the Belgian Parliament (November 24th 2016) calling for a concretisation of the differentiation policy (but not a boycott nor sanctions, which, according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2017, Reynders can only be decided at an EU level because the decision could harm the peace dialogue). It is clear (from debate in Parliament fuelled by Vooruit, PS, Groen, Ecolo, and reports of 11.11.11./CNCD) that the European differentiation measures

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dekamer.be/FLWB/PDF/55/1610/55K1610019.pdf>

do not work in practice (flaws in labelling of products coming from Israeli settlements and control). A process of listing all companies active in the settlements led by the UN, which was supported by the Belgian government from March 2018 onwards, was concluded in February 2020. An agreement at Belgian government level was finally concluded in October 2021 with concrete measures to be taken by the Ministries of Finance and Economic Affairs in order to ensure more control on labelling, notwithstanding the fact that the trade with Israel only represents a small part of the overall trade.

- **EU** - Since 1995, there has been an Association Agreement between the EU and Israel for cooperation in all sorts of areas and agreements on trade. Its implementation is not always coherent with European policy and relations with Israel lead to impunity. The EU could do more. For example, the EU could take a number of steps, such as deepening the differentiation policy, and it could add a territorial clause to the Partnership Priorities, one of the important future instruments for EU-Israel relations. Several voices advocate suspending the treaty as long as Israel continues to build settlements. A call to end financial involvement in the settlements (see differentiation policy) caused the Israeli state to disrupt the dialogue between the EU and Israel in December 2017 (and this was not restored since then).
- **Stepping up settlement construction and demolition in area C** - Israeli authorities are stepping up the forced displacement of Palestinian communities and the destruction of homes and infrastructure in area C in the West Bank. In 2016, the number of demolitions increased dramatically, with 1,093 Palestinian structures and European projects worth more than €500,000 destroyed. For several years now, forced displacement has been higher on the agenda of the EU and its member states, and they are taking active steps to protect Palestinian communities in area C and to request bilateral compensation for infrastructure damage paid for with European member state public funds. Belgium is one of those Member States that finances projects and Belgium started the West Bank Protection Consortium in 2015 together with other Member States and organisations. The consortium has systematised the complaints against Israel and the calls for compensation, but they did not obtain any compensation from Israel so far. Aggression has not diminished: since the first measurement by the UN in 2002, reports demonstrate a 20% increase in violence by settlers in the last 4 years (information from OPTI country office). The issue of demolitions is regularly on the agenda of the federal parliament (with input from Groen-Ecolo, Vooruit, PS, PTB-PVDA).
- **Blockade of Gaza** – Almost 15 years after the start of the blockade in 2007, the isolation of Gaza seems to have become permanent. Almost 2 million people, half of which are children below 18, have no prospect of change. Israel perpetuates its policy of permanent separation between the West Bank and Gaza, making the idea of a Palestinian state impossible. Internationally, there is little protest. In Gaza itself, there is little room to criticise Hamas' policy. Additional difficulty is the fact that there is an official no-contact policy of the BE government when it comes to Gaza's authorities, all needs to be managed through PA authorities who themselves are not always treating Gaza in a fair way due to ongoing tensions between the PA and Hamas. The blockade and the violence against the people from Gaza are regularly on the agenda of the Belgian Parliament. A more outspoken position from the Belgian government on taking actions against the blockade is hindered by the conflict between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority and by the lack of a strong EU-response, without which the Belgian government will not take action. The Belgian government also goes with the security narrative Israel imposes. Belgian government always underlines the need to address the legitimate safety concerns of the Israeli state.
- **Civil society and shrinking space** - Human rights and peace organisations in the OPTI are increasingly targeted by the Israeli government. In July 2016, the Knesset passed a law stipulating that, organisations that receive more than half of their funding through foreign governments must publicly declare this in any publication or public communication. Organisations that receive funding from private funds, as is often the case with settlement support groups, escape this obligation. Hostility to Palestinian NGOs and human

rights defenders is also increasing. Finally, international organisations also face increasing difficulties in gaining access to Israel and the Palestinian territories. Israel's Designation of Six Civil Society Groups as Terrorist organisations (December 2021) was however deemed unsubstantiated by the Belgian government.

## 2.2 THE POLICY WORK OF OXFAM SOLIDARITEIT ON OPTI

- <sup>25</sup> **Way of working** - Oxfam has a long history of lobby on the Middle East. Since end of 2019 the focus is primarily on Palestine and Yemen. While the situation in Palestine has been the subject of public Oxfam campaigns and advocacy work in Belgium since many years, Oxfam Solidariteit took the lead in the European advocacy on OPT since 2019. In the period under revision there have been two consecutive **advocacy officers** with a period of various months where the position was not filled for 7 months. The previous lobby advocacy officer went to the Cabinet of the new Minister for Development cooperation, Meryam Kitir (October 2020) and the current officer started in June 2021. This advocacy officer (since March 2022 the title is advocacy advisor) is at the same time humanitarian programme officer and focal point for humanitarian advocacy in the EU within the humanitarian programmes and advocacy team at Oxfam Solidariteit.
- <sup>26</sup> **Oxfam Solidariteit needs to take into account the Oxfam confederation:** all decisions about positioning are taken together with affiliates involved, to take into account different national political contexts and national risk analysis and priorities. Some positions cannot be taken. Oxfam USA for e.g. is not willing to be explicit on the demand for banning Israeli products coming from occupied territory as this might be seen as a plea for BDS. In such case, Oxfam Solidariteit might support studies and actions by other NGOs (for e.g. by 11.11.11.) but not openly and it cannot not be part of the consortium Don't Buy Into Occupation (DBIO, started end of 2020 at the initiative of 11.11.11.).
- <sup>27</sup> Another example is that of Apartheid: the confederation is not openly engaged in the discussion on apartheid. Although Oxfam agrees that the 2-state solution is no longer real/an option, because of the reality (de facto annexation) on the ground, it cannot use the word Apartheid. The problem is with the application of the legal framework related to Apartheid to Palestine/Israel. Oxfam however supported the position of the BE Platform on the Middle-East and its narrative is that every person has a right to live life free of discrimination. This means that OBE cannot join most actions and public declarations made by the BE platform, as it doesn't receive the required sign off from Oxfam International and some affiliates.
- <sup>28</sup> The lobby topics on Israel and Palestine are generally decided upon by **Oxfam in Palestine** (part of the International Oxfam Confederation) with offices in Ramallah, Gaza and Jerusalem. In Palestine, there are 3 officers and a policy lead working on themes of civic space, humanitarian needs, gender justice and economic justice. Oxfam does not work on legal issues (agreed that this is a role for other NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch to take). Oxfam Solidariteit funds the lobby work in Palestine (next to other funders and Oxfams, of which Oxfam US, Oxfam Novib and Germany are the most important ones) and is connected to the RIC campaign group ('rights in crisis'), a network of Oxfam staff working on humanitarian advocacy and campaign. The funding for Oxfam Palestine is not earmarked for specific lobby topics or campaigns but it's based on the needs and requests coming from Oxfam in Palestine. Narrowing down the main lobby themes to specific topics is sometimes done 'en cours de route', during the execution of the programme addressing issues that come up, always in line with the advocacy strategy and objectives developed by the country team.

- <sup>29</sup> Aligned with the principle of decolonisation and the Oxfam 2020 and governance model that the confederation developed/is developing to ensure more independence for Oxfam country offices, not only the topics, but also the positions and messages and products are developed by Oxfam in Palestine. The idea being that people in need can speak for themselves. Thus, Oxfam Solidariteit supports the Oxfam Office in Palestine to reach international audiences and adapt the messages to the Belgian and European context and targets.
- <sup>30</sup> **In Europe and Brussels**, Oxfam Solidariteit participates in regular three weekly meetings with the Oxfam EU office, further to ad hoc meetings with other partners and exchanges using whatsapp groups. Oxfam Solidariteit has **the lead on advocacy on Palestine among Oxfam affiliates in Europe**, and it's also the **most active affiliate** when it comes to supporting Oxfam Palestine's advocacy activities. When a specific topic concerns the EU, Oxfam EU office will have a key role. However, Oxfam Solidariteit can still take the lead, for eg. when Oxfam partners from Gaza visited Brussels, Oxfam Solidariteit coordinated the visit and substantially contributed to the talking points (this was the case in sept 2021 and in December 2021 – as a virtual tour).
- <sup>31</sup> **Activities** - Oxfam Solidariteit produces little outputs (such as reports) itself but works with what is coming from Oxfam in Palestine, amplifying and adapting messages where needed to reach the Belgian audience. The advocacy is evidence based: evidence is provided by the partners and staff of Oxfam in Palestine on the ground (implementing projects), testimonies and research (for e.g. financing research to calculate the impact of the blockade on ICT and agro-business In Gaza by interviewing business men/women in Gaza and analysing data).
- <sup>32</sup> The main activities of the lobby work of Oxfam Solidariteit Oxfam Solidariteit consist of:
- monitoring policies and investing in context analysis,
  - communication (website, opinion articles, reports), distribution of written materials produced by Oxfam Palestine to policy targets
  - facilitating meetings in Brussels for colleagues from Palestine and partners (lobby tours),
  - financing research and facilitate data collection within humanitarian programmes funded by Oxfam Solidariteit – often related to the following point
  - Review the advocacy component of DGD funded project proposals and provide support in implementing the advocacy activities related to these projects
  - exchange with partners/other organisations. In Belgium/Brussels, interaction is taking place with the NGOs Broederlijk Delen, 11.11.11 and CNCD, CIDSE, NRC and Action contre la Faim, ACTAlliance.
  - engaging with decision makers one on one (informally), during lobby tours and in briefing meetings (ad hoc and in the framework of the CSC and with partners from the Middle East Platform led by 11.11.11/CNCD.
- <sup>33</sup> All activities (execution and output) and contacts with external stakeholders are recorded in a tool 'advocacy tracker'.
- <sup>34</sup> **Positions** – The positions of Oxfam for this period are summarised in the table below.

Table 2: overview of positions

thematic	positions period 2017-2021 <sup>4</sup> – during lobby tours, more specific and concrete messages/positions are formulated that are not reflected in this table
Differentiation policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Key targets from the International community take concrete steps to implement territorial differentiation, in particular in economic and financial activities and bilateral agreements, between Israel (inside the 1967 borders) and Israeli settlements in the OPT</li> <li>- Ask for legislation banning import of products from Israeli settlements in the West Bank (not publicly but only via support to other organisations, such as 11.11.11./CNCD</li> <li>- Ask European countries not to trade with and invest in settlements</li> </ul>
Shrinking Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ask to halt labelling NGOs exposing human rights violations in the West Bank as terrorist organisations, incriminating them and their partners/funders as a mean to silence them– see also shrinking space briefing June 2019</li> <li>- international donors pay attention to involving local actors (Israeli and Palestinian NGOs) in EU aid programmes</li> </ul>
Separation policy, Gaza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Governments/ donors publicly challenge the Israeli government separation policy and invest in more sustainable models of aid that increase sustainable and economic development programmes that connect Gaza with the West Bank including East Jerusalem</li> <li>- Donor governments should invest significantly more in long-term and principled models of aid that increase sustainable development in Gaza and maintain and increase connections between Gaza and the West Bank</li> <li>- BE Govt sets Gaza back on the EU agenda and challenges the no-contact policy (with Hamas) in private settings.</li> <li>- providing more efficient and principled humanitarian support, ensuring access to and from Gaza and movement of goods and people, and, in the long term, lifting the blockade</li> </ul>
Forced displacement (Annexation, Zone C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The International community takes tangible and visible steps to challenge the Israeli government permit and planning regime and policies and forced displacement of Palestinians in Area C</li> <li>- The EU should undertake a technical review of the full scope of its dealings with Israel to identify and fix remaining loopholes that allow the settlements to benefit</li> <li>- BE govt does not wait for de jure annexation to set up a list of countermeasures to counter the ongoing de facto annexation of (parts of) the West Bank</li> <li>- Belgium should be ready for concrete measures in case actual annexation of the West Bank should take place</li> <li>- Asking for actions to prevent the expansion of Jerusalem at the expense of Palestinian territory in East Jerusalem and the West Bank</li> <li>- Asking for measures to request financial compensation from Israel for demolition and confiscation of donor-funded infrastructure in the West Bank and East Jerusalem by the Israeli authorities</li> </ul>
Agriculture and economic development policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Challenge and demand Israel to lift the economic and political restrictions imposed by the Government of Israel to the Palestinian agricultural sector more in particular: occupation of area C depriving Palestinian economy of 63% of its agricultural land, dual use and trade restrictions hindering farmers to meet EU export standards, applying territorial differentiation to all agreements with Israel and opposing European trade with Israeli settlements.</li> <li>- Relevant Palestinian authorities improve economic development policies aimed at increased access to markets, income and livelihoods opportunities and a more effective regulatory environment</li> </ul>
gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At least 2 Palestinian laws/policies are amended/implemented to support gender equality and women's rights in the OPT (GJ). Work under this objective will contribute to a more gender equitable realisation of the rights advocated for through this strategy</li> </ul>

<sup>35</sup> **Overall theory of change** – the **most important lobby targets are 4**, they are situated in Belgium and in order of importance these are:

<sup>4</sup> Overview based on the information and documents shared with the consultant.

1. The cabinet of the Minister of Development Cooperation, Meryame Kitir, especially the advisor on Humanitarian programmes ;
2. DGD and more in particular the humanitarian team, Middle East Unit and Palestine desk. Oxfam Solidariteit identifies (windows of) opportunities, establishes relations when opportunities arise and invites the Palestinian team to join in (in the exchange). Occasionally Oxfam Solidariteit is invited by DGD to meet to discuss a context development and provide information from the field and the impact of such development on its activities and local partners. Oxfam Solidariteit is following Belgian politics on behalf of Oxfam Palestine. A lot of information sharing is done at this level, including about relations with ECHO and NEAR (see further). Influencing DGD means also influencing the Belgian MFA, the Belgian Consulate in Jerusalem and the EU because of the interactions with the actors at EU level (assumption to validate);
3. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (and the connected diplomats at the Tel Aviv embassy, Consulate in Jerusalem and the BE representation at the EU). MFA is providing less time and opportunity than DGD to meet and interact with Oxfam (and other NGOs in general).
4. The Commission of Foreign Affairs in the Federal Parliament (and 5 members in this commission, most importantly from the Belgian parties Vooruit, PS, Ecolo and Groen).

<sup>36</sup> Oxfam Solidariteit and the actors mentioned in the above actors are interacting with/and influencing each other in the following way:

- Oxfam Solidariteit shares information with DGD. DGD is in relation with BE diplomats in Israel, Palestine and at the EU and can also influence the agenda of COHAFA and of the European Commission through the MFA. Oxfam Solidariteit gets its messages and information to the cabinet of the Minister of Development directly and through DGD. Both the Cabinet and DGD are expected to influence the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, rather than Oxfam (or other NGOs) that has less leverage and opportunities to influence the Minister and the Ministry. Oxfam sometimes encourages its contacts with members of parliament (in BE, mainly Vooruit, PS, Ecolo and Groen) in the Commission of External Relations to ask questions to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Development cooperation.
- Supported by Oxfam US and in close interaction with DGD, Oxfam Solidariteit tries to influence the UN Security Council.
- Lobby at the level of the EU happens with the Oxfam EU office and is sometimes done in collaboration with NRC (but rather not with the platforms of NGOs in BE). This is always aligned with Oxfam in Palestine. The main targets of these efforts are DG NEAR, Echo and EEAS as these are the ones that shape and implement EU external policy and EU development and humanitarian aid and have some leverage and opportunity to influence the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority (for e.g. by preparing European policies and priorities on Palestine and determining modalities for programmes).
- In particular cases, Oxfam Solidariteit might try to influence through MPs or directly the BE Minister of Foreign Affairs to influence the Israeli government, for instance on the designation of Palestinian civil society organisations as terrorist
- Contacts with European MEPs of different countries (mainly through Oxfam EU office) are used to try to influence the European Commission and positions and voting behaviour of the so-called blocker states (in order to shift the balance in power within the EU).
- Oxfam Solidariteit also indirectly is trying to influence Israeli authorities and public opinion, more in particular through the partner GISHA or other Israeli partners. When possible the partners are involved in talks organised by Oxfam with lobby targets.



### 3 EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT

#### 3.1 OVERVIEW OF CONTACTS AND OUTPUTS

- <sup>37</sup> The focus of analysis is the lobby topics that are also related to the selected cases for this evaluation: differentiation policy, annexation and forced displacement and separation policy and Gaza.
- <sup>38</sup> **Contacts** – From the contact tracker, it appears that Oxfam is mostly pro-active in its humanitarian advocacy (as compared to actions that were labelled as reactive) and that advocacy on OPTI takes a large part of the contacts (next to other topics, such as Yemen). The figures (summarised in the table below) clearly show that Belgian administration has been the main target for Oxfam in Belgium (and for OPTI), and members of Belgian Parliament and European Commission to a lesser extent. Obviously, the number of contacts was lower in 2021, due to the fact that the position of the lobbyist was not filled for more than 6 months. It is also clear from the overview that a very important part of the advocacy work is done at the EU level (which was not specifically assessed in this evaluation).

*Table 3: overview of contacts of tOxfam Solidariteit on OPT<sup>5</sup>*

<b>Contacts (all, not only OPTI)</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Party members	1	3		1
Parliament		13	14	
Belgian Government		2	6	10
Cabinet of Belgian Ministers	1	2		
Belgian Delegation in OPTI	3	2	3	
European Commission	9	10	11	1
European Parliament	4	3	4	
Belgian and European Administration – the dashboard does not make a difference	9	23	48	14
European Council			1	1
Media	4	15	6	
Embassy	2	3	1	
Enabel		2		
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>27</b>
Related to OPTI	23	34	35	6
annexation/Demolitions	3	9	3	0
Differentiation	3	1	3	0
separation policy/Gaza	6	6	11	4
Other	11	18	18	2

- <sup>39</sup> There is a diversity in the political parties that Oxfam engages with in Belgium, but mainly parties situated at the left of the centre.

<sup>5</sup> The categories stem from the Excel sheets of Oxfam. The evaluator has added a specific row looking at the Belgian administration.

Table 4: overview of political parties

	Vooruit/PS	Groen/Ecolo	CD&V	Open VLD	NVA
2018	2	1	1 <sup>6</sup>		1
2019	2	5	1		
2020	2	1	3	1	1
2021	2				

- <sup>40</sup> **Outputs<sup>7</sup>** - The output and product tracker provided information about the type of documentation that is provided to different stakeholders. The tracker is less informative for the years 2020-2021 and does not give a full picture of all outputs as the focus is on documents on which Oxfam works together with others. There is a good mix of pro-active outputs (planned) and reacting to what happens in the context with in general a stronger focus on Gaza. Documents produced often remain in the background as Oxfam is not investing a lot in 'public advocacy' and thus usually supports other organisations (with content or financing) to produce public reports or articles on their websites, for e.g. in 2018, Oxfam co-financed (and, with Oxfam OPTI provided content for) the report published by CNCD and 11 on 'Doing business with the occupied territories'. Press outputs mainly refer to press in Belgium using Oxfam OPT information to communicate to the wider public. Although difficult to ask for media attention for OPTI and Gaza, Oxfam clearly succeeded in contacting leading (written) press both in the French speaking and Flemish speaking part of the country (Knack, VRTNWS, Le Soir, RTBF Radio, La Libre Belgique, De Morgen, MO\*, De Tijd, Radio1).
- <sup>41</sup> 2018: 18/26 outputs produced in 2018 were related to OPTI and 11/18 to Gaza. Press outputs (# 10) are often mentioned in the tracker and to a lesser extent input/writing of policy notes or background documents (#5). In 9/18 cases Oxfam was pro-active in taking initiative. In 9/18 cases, Oxfam considered the effect of the outputs to be reasonable (with regards to the others being labeled as limited). Oxfam invested a lot in the statement of the youth presidents of BE political parties (May 2018) related to Gaza and in the co-financing of the 11-report 'Doing business with occupation' (May 2018) and the organisation of the parliamentary lunch on the same report (May 2018).
- <sup>42</sup> 2019: 15/46 products were related to OPTI (while other related to other countries or topics). 6/15 were related to Gaza. Press outputs (#6) were more focussed on differentiation and settlements (#4) than Gaza (#2). Of the 15 products, 6 were proactive. 5/15 were considered to have a good to a very good impact.
- <sup>43</sup> 2020: Only 5 products were registered in the product tracker. None of these were related to OPTI.
- <sup>44</sup> 2021: 10 products were registered in the product tracker. One of these was related to OPTI where input was provided to the report 'don't buy into occupation'.
- <sup>45</sup> The output tracker does not refer to the press releases that are published on the website of Oxfam Solidariteit: the website<sup>8</sup> informs us that there were no press releases in 2017-2018 but 3 in 2019, 3 in 2020 and 2 in 2021.

<sup>6</sup> The evaluator has added a contact which appeared from the detailed information in the tracker (not the dashboard).

<sup>7</sup> The output tracker did not always provide detailed information. In 2018, 26 product outputs were uniformly and carefully registered in the tracker.

In 2019, 46 product outputs were registered, inputs were not always done in a careful way. In 2020, only 5 product outputs registered, inputs were full and detailed. In 2021, 10 products were registered, inputs were full and detailed.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.oxfamsol.be/nl/pers/persberichten>

*Table 5: overview of the most important (background and internal) documents related to OPTI9*

Date	Title
2017	– ‘No end in sight’. Media brief/background document with Q&A that was produced to support communication related to 50 Years of Occupation and clarifies Oxfam positions
2017	– A CLOSER VIEW ON GAZA’S MOST RECENT ELECTRICITY CRISIS. Examining the impact on DGD funded programs and partners. Briefing paper for DGD, October 12 <sup>th</sup> 2017
2018	– Update media brief with positions of Oxfam
2018	– ISRAEL TIGHTENS GAZA BLOCKADE, CIVILIANS BEAR THE BRUNT. Briefing note in collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council and Première Urgence Internationale (July 2018)
2018	– ‘Leven in Gaza hangt aan een zijden draadje door aanhoudende Israëlische blokkade’ Article written to be published under the name of Alison Martin, responsible for advocacy and campaigning for Oxfam in OPTI, August 16 <sup>th</sup> 2018
2018	– Update of context for Oxfam partners with view to MENA meeting in October 2018
2019	– Context update (May 2019)
2019	– Private Briefing note for DGD on shrinking space, June 2019
2019	– Demolition talking points, July 2019 (update) and text for ECOLO
2019	– Presentation ‘Agriculture under siege: Political barriers to Palestinian agribusiness’ (+ internal report on lobby tour)
2019	– Background note on settlement trade, November 2019 (input in political note by CNCD and 11)
	– Web documentary on the water crisis in Gaza
2020	– Briefing note of Oxfam, SHIFTING VULNERABILITIES IN GAZA. The faces of ongoing crisis in Gaza, May 2020
2021	– Two documents produced by Oxfam for the UN WASH cluster: “The impact of climate change on access to water for the most vulnerable communities in southern west bank” and “Access to flooding mitigation and prevention measures in light of climate change impact in Gaza” – Documentary on water crisis in Gaza ‘Salt’

<sup>46</sup> **Outputs and products in relation to the main strategies** - When looking at the above mentioned strategies (monitoring policies and investing in context analysis, communication with the press, facilitating meetings for partners, financing research, collaboration with other organisations, and engaging with decision makers), the tracker files show a strong emphasis on the following strategies: communication with the press, collaboration with other organisations (in BE, with the leads of the Federal platform, 11.11.11. and CNCD mainly) and directly engaging with decision makers. This engagement with decision makers is for the large part through bilateral meetings in person (private lobby).

<sup>47</sup> The strategy of financing research has been applied to a lesser extent and mainly within the framework of collaboration with other organisations in the Belgian context. The strategy of monitoring policies concerns is developed by (at least) yearly updates of context and positions and is basis of background documents and press communication. Facilitating meetings for partners is most often done within the framework of yearly lobby tours in the EU (co-organised with the EU office), 2 tours in 2018 and obviously none in 2020 (because of Covid) and 2 in-2021, the first one co-organised with the EU office and the second one with a group of Oxfam affiliates, including the EU office.

<sup>9</sup> Based on what was shared by Oxfam with the evaluator

### 3.2 OVERVIEW OF OUTCOMES AND CHANGES OBSERVED AT THE LEVEL OF LOBBY TARGETS

<sup>48</sup> The evaluators have organised the information/data according to topic and position. The Oxfam contact tracker does not specify concrete changes unless in 2020 and 2021. Based on the timeline reconstruction, the evaluators have added changes. Factors/actor that played a role in the outcomes according to Oxfam (shared during the start-up phase of the evaluation) are in italic.

Table 6: overview of lobby positions and changes

Theme	Positions period 2017-2021 <sup>10</sup>	What has changed?
Differentiation policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key targets from the International community take concrete steps to implement territorial differentiation, in particular in economic and financial activities and bilateral agreements, between Israel (inside the 1967 borders) and Israeli settlements in the OPT</li> <li>Ask for legislation banning import of products from Israeli settlements in the West Bank</li> <li>Ask European countries not to trade with and invest in settlements</li> </ul>	<p><b>Concrete steps to implement territorial differentiation</b>, see also 3.2.3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2018 several questions in parliament (PS, SPA, CD&amp;V on differentiation) – <i>constant attention by Oxfam for the situation in OPTI with media actors (De Standaard, VRT and De Tijd), always ready to alert</i></li> <li>March 2018: BE position in the UN security council on the publication of the database (differentiation) -<i>work of Oxfam, CNCD and 11.11.11.</i></li> <li>June 25th 2020: Resolution passed on restrictive measures by BE Govt to IL in case of annexation – <i>collaboration of Oxfam with 11.11.11. and CNCD (documenting violations with regards to labelling, contacts with the ministries of financial and economic affairs + press conference of Oxfam during lobby tour on EU court ruling (November 12<sup>th</sup> 2019 about wines from Golan Heights that were not correctly labelled)</i></li> <li>September 30th 2020: coalition government agreement refers to differentiation – <i>joint visits and contacts of Oxfam with 11.11.11. and CNCD to political parties</i></li> <li>October 2021: agreement at government level about the concretisation of the differentiation policy – <i>2-pager from 11.11.11. on concrete measures pushing discussions + framing by Oxfam that escalation of violence in Gaza (May 2021) is a consequence of annexation policies</i></li> <li>November 2021: communication of Minister Wilmès on stricter control for products from settlements – <i>work of 11.11.11. proposing concrete measures for negotiating parties</i></li> </ul> <p><b>ask for ban</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>February 22nd 2022 EU citizens' initiative<sup>11</sup> to collect 1.000.000 signatures asking for a ban on products from settlements – <i>support for the initiative by 11.11.11. and CNCD (and Oxfam)</i></li> </ul>
Shrinking Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask to halt labelling NGOs exposing human rights violations in the West Bank as terrorist organisations incriminating them and their partners/funders as a mean to silence them</li> <li>international donors pay attention to involving Israeli and Palestinian NGOs in EU aid programmes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Protection of space for civil society</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>June 25th 2020:</b> parliamentary hearing and resolution passed also referring to human rights – <i>11.11.11. report on shrinking space to which Oxfam contributed with content</i></li> <li><b>July 2021:</b> the BE embassy in Tel Aviv called israeli gov to stop smear campaign on Belgium and Belgian NGOs (among which Oxfam Solidariteit) financing Palestinian civil society organisations - <i>DGD asked for a briefing with Oxfam Solidariteit and other Belgian NGOs on financing/support to Palestinian partners accused by Israel (and extreme right in Belgium) of terrorism and send a report to the consulate in Jerusalem</i></li> </ul>

<sup>10</sup> Based on the information of Oxfam shared with the consultant. During lobby tours, more specific and concrete messages/positions are formulated that are not reflected in this table.

<sup>11</sup> <https://elsc.support/news/a-new-european-citizens-initiativenbsp>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>July 14<sup>th</sup> 2021: Minister Kitir is asked by an MP of the committee on External Relations at the Belgian federal Parliament about the investigation on financing of terrorist activities in Palestine using Belgian funds, and she answered that it showed that the Israeli file contained no concrete material evidence of possible fraud at the partner organizations. She added that she saw no reason to freeze funds, nor to have any additional external investigation carried out. (<a href="https://www.dekamer.be/doc/CCRI/html/55/ic554x.html">https://www.dekamer.be/doc/CCRI/html/55/ic554x.html</a>)</li> <li>October 28<sup>th</sup>: Minister Kitir tweets about her concern about the decision by the Israeli MoD to consider 6 Palestinian NGOs as terrorist organisations and declares that accusations of terrorism are always taken seriously, but can't be used to prevent legitimate activities. <a href="https://twitter.com/MeryameKitir/status/1453625978916413440?t=RleJkEIBWbmC92qque4ayA&amp;s=19">https://twitter.com/MeryameKitir/status/1453625978916413440?t=RleJkEIBWbmC92qque4ayA&amp;s=19</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Role of NGOS in donor programmes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2022 new bilateral programme of the Belgian government with Palestinian Authorities was signed and is youth focused and includes GAZA: <i>in which NGOs play a crucial role.</i></li> </ul>
Separation policy, Gaza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governments/ donors publicly challenge the Israeli government separation policy and invest in more sustainable models of aid that increase sustainable and economic development programmes that connect Gaza with the West Bank including East Jerusalem</li> <li>Donor governments should invest significantly more in long-term and principled models of aid that increase sustainable development in Gaza and maintain and increase connections between Gaza and the West Bank</li> <li>BE Govt sets Gaza back on the EU agenda and challenges the no-contact policy (with Hamas) in private settings.</li> <li>providing more efficient and principled humanitarian support, ensuring access to and from Gaza and movement of goods and people, and, in the long term, lifting the blockade</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lifting the blockade, see also point 3.2.3.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>May, 17<sup>th</sup> 2018</b>, plenary discussion parliament on Gaza uprising: narrative on Gaza as open prison, not providing perspective (input CD&amp;V and Vooruit) – <i>Briefing of Oxfam together with 11.11.11. of Vincent Van Peteghem (CD&amp;V) and Dirk van der Maelen (Vooruit) + news on first big protests in Gaza with many youngsters being killed</i></li> <li>XX 2018: BE government was vocal during the UNSC on the request to have an independent investigation with regards to the violence of Israel in Gaza in 2018.</li> <li><b>Jan 2020</b> Questions in BE parliament by Simon Moutquin (Ecolo) on the return of refugees to Gaza – <i>opinion article of Oxfam in newspapers on return policy and support with information</i></li> <li><b>March 2020</b>: 3 questions in the Commission for Foreign Affairs in the federal Parliament (on Gaza and Covid) by CD&amp;V and SPA</li> <li>2022 new bilateral programme of the Belgian government with Palestinian Authorities was signed and is youth focused and includes GAZA:</li> </ul>
Forced displacement (Annexation, Zone C) and demolitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The International community takes tangible and visible steps to challenge the Israeli government permit and planning regime and policies and forced displacement of Palestinians in Area C</li> <li>The EU should undertake a technical review of the full scope of its dealings with Israel to identify and fix remaining loopholes that allow the settlements to benefit (source: Oxfam Talking Points</li> </ul>	<p><b>Call for compensation and against settlement expansion, see also 3.2.3.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>October 2017</b> : policy note Min Reynders, on condemnation of destruction humanitarian projects – <i>support to questions in Parliament (19/07/2017) on demolition and compensation (from Ecolo) + Work of the Westbank Protection Consortium with a strong lead by the BE government; Oxfam supported with information and contacts through the EU office and NRC with ECHO and DG NEAR</i></li> <li><b>July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019</b>, MOFA, Dev coop and Defense condemn demolishment of projects in UN security council (oxfam water project zone C) – <i>work of Oxfam with ECOLO and July update on demolishment, collaboration with press (alert), intensive work between Oxfam and umbrella organisations</i></li> </ul>

	<p>EU review in preparation of MENA directors meeting next week Tuesday, 31 October 2018).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– BE govt does not wait for de jure annexation to set up a list of countermeasures to counter the ongoing de facto annexation of (parts of) the West Bank</li> <li>– Belgium should be ready for concrete measures in case actual annexation of the West Bank should take place</li> <li>– Asking for actions to prevent the expansion of Jerusalem at the expense of Palestinian territory in East Jerusalem and the West Bank</li> <li>– Asking for measures to request financial compensation from Israel for demolition and confiscation of donor-funded infrastructure in the West Bank and East Jerusalem by the Israeli authorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>December 2020</b> formal position of the BE government on demolitions at the level of the UN Security Council – <i>Collaboration with Oxfam Solidarity and other Oxfam country offices and Oxfam New York</i></li> <li>– <b>June 25th 2020:</b> Resolution from Ecolo/Groen and PS passed responding to de facto annexation with reference to the importance of asking for compensation for demolitions – <i>collaboration of Oxfam with 11.11.11. and CNCD, constant attention by Oxfam in contact with press, always ready to alert</i></li> <li>– <b>September 30st 2020:</b> coalition government agreement refers to annexation and countermeasures (but no explicit reference to compensation) – <i>joint visits and contacts of Oxfam with 11.11.11. and CNCD to political parties</i></li> <li>– <b>2021:</b> Belgium continued to pursue a coherent policy regarding OPTI issues. They took a frontrunning role by systematically reacting to demolitions, on the EU and UNSC level. On the EU level, Belgium led the EU like-minded group of 8 Member States and managed to establish two UNSC EU-5 common statements condemning settlement expansion. Oxfam was also quoted during a Belgian UNSC briefing condemning the ongoing demolitions in Area C.</li> </ul>
Agriculture and economic development policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ban the economic and political restrictions imposed by the Government of Israel to the Palestinian agricultural sector (role of Dutch and German MS), more in particular: occupation of area C depriving Palestinian economy of 63% of its agricultural land, dual use and trade restrictions hindering farmers to meet EU export standards, differentiation and opposing European trade with Israeli settlements.</li> <li>- Relevant Palestinian authorities improve economic development policies aimed at increased access to markets, income and livelihoods opportunities and a more effective regulatory environment</li> </ul>	not evaluated
gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At least 2 Palestinian laws/policies are amended/implemented to support gender equality and women's rights in the OPT (GJ). Work under this objective will contribute to a more gender equitable realisation of the rights advocated for through this strategy</li> </ul>	Not evaluated

### 3.3 CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS ON SPECIFIC CASES

- 49 The evaluators looked into three specific cases: influence on the BE position with regards to demolitions (under the topic of forced displacement and annexation), The influence of Oxfam on the content of the coalition agreement, more in particular related to the differentiation policy and influence on challenging criteria for refugees from Gaza.
- 50 The contribution analysis aims to analyse to what extent and in what way Oxfam contributed to change in policies.
- 51 The cases are the following:

*Table 7: overview of cases to be analysed*

Case 1 – Formal position of BE government in the UN Security Council (2019 and 2020)	This case can give insight in how Oxfam (thanks to its network) can work at different levels: DGD, European level, exploiting its added value of being able to bring trustworthy/reliable and update information about actual situation on the ground.
Case 2– Attention for differentiation policy in the coalition agreement of the Belgian Government in 2020 – no contribution analysis	This case allows us to build further on a case of 11.11.11. on differentiation policy developed in a baseline evaluation in 2019.
Case 3 - Challenging criteria for refugees from Gaza in 2019	This case demonstrates that it is sometimes hard to move a stone, the situation on Gaza is blocked and the no-contact policy of BE government (and other governments) prohibiting formal relations with Gazan government, make it almost impossible to move beyond humanitarian assistance and engage in longer term collaboration. Trying to find angles to keep Gaza on the political agenda in this case also challenged the rules for asylum. It also shows how Oxfam uses momentum (Gaza uprising) to frame its messages.

- 52 For each case, a performance story was developed; for case 1 and 3 a contribution analysis was developed. Case 2 is not analysed to the same depth as too little information was available. The evaluators have described the case and highlighted the importance and role of Oxfam.

#### 3.3.1. CASE 1: BE POSITION IN UN SECURITY COUNCIL (2019 AND 2020)

The BE positions in the Security Council (UNSC) are considered by Oxfam to be a milestone in the lobby to stop forced displacements in Area C (in the context of the annexation policy of Israel). It demonstrates understanding (from BE government) that action at EU level will not suffice to influence Israel, that action needs to be pursued at the international level and that individual EU members states, such as BE should not wait for a common EU position to condemn annexation policy.

##### Performance story

This change has a history going back to 2014-2015. After the first demolition of a Belgian funded project in 2014<sup>12</sup>, Reynders took the issue to the EU level which led to the creation in 2015 of the West Bank Protection

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<sup>12</sup> 29th of September 2014 in the village of Khirbet Al Taweel in the West Bank, also documented by De Standaard in Feb 10<sup>th</sup> 2014.

Consortium; a strategic partnership between DG ECHO, ten like-minded EU Member States and the UK and five International NGOs (NRC, as lead Agency, ACTED, Action Against Hunger, GVC and PUI).<sup>13</sup>

The consortium started mapping the demolitions and the reaction to new demolitions gradually developed into a more automatic and structural response asking for compensation. The work of the consortium eventually motivated BE (together with 7 other EU MS) to formally ask for actual compensations for the first time in August 2017 (in the case related to the destruction of a school at Junnet Al-Dib, near Bethlehem) and this was repeated over the years. The asks for compensation were developed on a bilateral level (no longer waiting for action at the EU level), without any formal response from Israel.

This initiative has helped BE NGOs, such as Oxfam in their efforts to keep the annexation policy on the political agenda: demolitions made very concrete to what extent the annexation policy was making it impossible for the Palestinian population to ensure basic infrastructure. Indignation about destruction of infrastructure and waste of donor/tax payers' money could be used for communication towards the general public.

In July, 23rd 2019, BE MFA, Development Cooperation and Defence jointly condemned illegal annexation policy and demolishment of an Oxfam water project in area C in the UN security council<sup>14</sup> and again in December, 23rd 2020 illegal settlements and demolitions were condemned.<sup>16</sup> These statements were prepared in consultation with 4 other MS (also sitting on the security council).

#### Actions of Oxfam

The first time a BE funded project in the West Bank, executed by BTC was demolished by the Israeli government in 2014, Oxfam (although not directly involved in the project) reacted via the BE press. Oxfam proposed the option for the BE government to ask for financial compensation through her contacts with DGD. The then Minister for Foreign Affairs Reynders reacted positively to that suggestion (accepting it as a valid reaction) not realising fully the implications of that statement (there was not yet a big discussion on the matter in the BE government). But main stakeholders in BE took it very seriously and the issue was brought up in parliament regularly, pressuring minister Reynders to take action. In the end Reynders had to act upon the expectations raised which led to the creation of the Consortium. Oxfam decided not to join the consortium, because it thought this could jeopardize its work on the ground and because Oxfam wanted to safeguard it's key engagement with local actors on the ground. However, Oxfam remained in good dialogue with staff from the consortium and worked in close collaboration with NRC. In 2017 Oxfam supported the ask for starting law suits within the consortium but the ask for legal action (up till now), but the evaluators have not found evidence that this has been taken up by decision makers.

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<sup>13</sup> The Consortium aimed to prevent the forcible transfer of Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem through a protection-oriented, multi-sectoral humanitarian response that encompasses emergency relief, community-based protection, the provision of basic and social infrastructure, legal aid and humanitarian advocacy.

<sup>14</sup> "Lastly, we reiterate our deep concern about the worrisome increase in the number of demolitions and S/PV.8648 The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question 28/10/2019 seizures of infrastructure and humanitarian projects in Zone C. We urge the Israeli authorities to put an end to those demolitions and to return what has been seized or pay compensation for the damages suffered, for the benefit of the Palestinian people" (Security Council, Security Council, Seventy-fourth year, 8648th meeting, Monday, 28 October 2019, 10 a.m..

<sup>15</sup> Speech of Speech by H.E. Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the United Nations Security Council on that date: referring to: 'We condemn the destruction, on 4 July, of the facilities of an Oxfam humanitarian project financed by Belgium in the village of Khirbet Ad-Duqaiqah, which had among other things, three water reservoirs and at least 2,500 trees' which also the opening statement in the press release of Ecolo.

<sup>16</sup> <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/S/2020/1275> : the Israeli settlement policy has continued not only through settlement expansion but also through demolitions and evictions,(...) That policy is illegal under international law, including resolution 2334 (2016). Settlements are likely to undermine any prospect and viability of a future Palestinian State. In that regard, I would like to reiterate Belgium's concerns over any plans that threaten the territorial continuity of a future Palestinian State and the future of Jerusalem as a shared capital. In keeping with the consistent position of the European Union, we will not recognize any changes to the lines of 4 June 1967, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties in negotiations. In that context, we also recall the obligation of all States under international law to distinguish between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967. Otherwise, the illegal settlement policy will be further strengthened.



Over the years, Oxfam supported the work by providing the BE administration DGD with concrete information from projects and the Palestinian context and working closely with the Oxfam EU office and the NRC to understand what information ECHO and DG NEAR (as members of the consortium) needed.

More in particular, the July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019 condemnation in the UN Security Council was influenced through ECOLO with whom Oxfam invested in an update of the demolition. The work with other affiliates in the confederation helped to monitor and follow-up on the statements and positions of other willing EU MS.

Case	Type of causal mechanism	Mechanisms
<b>Case 1 – Formal position of BE government in the UN Security Council (2019 and 2020)</b>	Primary explanation ( <i>action of Oxfam Solidariteit</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intensive contacts with DGD</li> <li>- Mobilisation of press</li> <li>- Sharing of direct information from the field (evidence-based advocacy) to targets</li> </ul>
	Commingleed rival ( <i>working together with Oxfam Solidariteit</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- West Bank Protection Consortium</li> <li>- Role of DGD in influencing the position in the UN security council</li> <li>- 11.11.11. and the Middle East Platform (publications)</li> <li>- Interplay within the confederation</li> </ul>
	Influencing factor from the context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demolitions by Israeli government caused indignation</li> </ul>
	Direct rival ( <i>actions from other actors that are not working with Oxfam Solidariteit aimed at a similar change</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- information from ECHO and DG NEAR to BE diplomats preparing UN security council</li> </ul>

Case	Contribution: high, medium, low (++) or (+) is proof of the claim (--) or (-) is proof that weakens the claim
<b>Case 1 – Formal position of BE government in the UN Security Council</b>	<p>The evaluators appreciate the contribution of Oxfam to the BE position in the UNSC as medium, although they were not able to validate/confirm all mechanisms. More in particular the relations with DGD are considered by the evaluators to be important and sufficient but not necessary as such to influence the BE statement. The mechanism of constantly alerting through press (in combination with contact with decision makers) however is considered to be necessary to ensure that the issue stays on the agenda and thus forces the BE government to be vocal.</p> <p>(+) The Oxfam contact tracker proves regular contacts with DGD officials. These are in turn in contact with MFA to come to joint positions on OPTI. Public statements, for e.g. in the Security Council of the UN and in the BE Parliament refer to projects of Oxfam to clarify what is happening. The evaluators were however unable to find proof that the suggestion of compensation came from Oxfam and was communicated to MFA through DGD.</p>

(++) Oxfam is always ready to alert on the issue of demolitions. Respondents confirm Oxfam played its role to constantly alert the system. One respondent stated that this alerting is their primary function as a CSO (rather than providing factual information for decision makers in order to take decision, as there are other sources)

(++) It is true that demolitions (and the waste of taxpayer's money) cause indignation, and that Oxfam responded timely in order to raise attention in the press and mobilise and support politicians. This was in particular working well when demolitions are very visible. For the demolitions in smaller villages, it is more difficult to raise attention and mobilisation.

(+) interaction between Oxfam and the Consortium through NRC at the EU level was not verified by the evaluators. Oxfam ensures follow-up through interaction with the NRC who is partner in the Westbank Protection Consortium. This consortium has played a big role in the position of BE.

(+) The evaluator was not able to reconstruct/validate the interplay (documented in the reports) between Oxfam affiliates (in casu Oxfam US and other MS) to influence the preparations for the statement at the UNSC by monitoring positions of other MS.

(+) a mechanism that was not mentioned by Oxfam was the mix of press contacts and contacts with Ecolo which seems to have worked well to increase attention for the matter and influence on the statement in the UNSC. Respondents state interaction between NGOs and BE diplomats is not uncommon but respondents could not confirm that this happened for this case. Sequence of events was the following:

- July 4th 2019: demolition of Oxfam project near Hebron
- July, 17th 2019: pro-active contacts with ECOLO brief on demolitions (with document with talking points that is quite elaborate) , ECOLO argues that they were the ones to contact Oxfam.
- same day follow follow-up with Ecolo with view to a press release of the party
- July 18th: press release Ecolo with ask of asking for compensation (but no complete match with asks of Oxfam in talking points, such as starting law suits and giving overview of costs) and referring to its engagement since 2017
- July 22<sup>nd</sup> : follow-up by Oxfam with 5 different media with success 2 radio interviews RTBF, article in La Libre Belgique, Le Soir and article in MO\*. Oxfam informed Ecolo about this result.
- July 23rd meeting in the security council with repeated condemnation and ask for compensation.

(-) action of BE decision makers in relation to demolitions is very much informed by the work of the Westbank Protection Consortium, whose importance was already underlined in the baseline study for 11.11.11..

(-) action of BE decision makers is also very much informed by the BE representatives that are present in Israel and that monitor and observe demolitions. They are on the ground, observing to the actual demolitions than Oxfam Solidariteit.

### 3.3.2. CASE 2 – REFERENCE TO THE CONTROL AND EVEN BAN ON PRODUCTS FROM ILLEGAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE BELGIAN COALITION AGREEMENT (SEPTEMBER 2020)

- <sup>53</sup> This change is considered to be a milestone in the lobby to enforce a differentiation policy because it offers a basis for political commitment

#### Performance story:

- <sup>54</sup> The reference in the coalition agreement (2020) to the importance of ensuring more control on labelling and even a ban on products from illegal settlements was based on the Parliament resolution of June 25th 2020 (introduced by Ecolo with Groen, PS and CDH and accepted with large majority) and offered a basis for political commitment. This reference should not be underestimated: it is very rare that a coalition agreement explicitly names a particular country when talking about measures. This took the debate in parliament to the next level and might lead to more serious talks about a full ban on products.
- <sup>55</sup> As is the case with many asks on OPTI, this change comes with a longer history and is somehow connected to the indignation about the demolitions (see case1). The latter was an important push for having a debate on and publishing of EU and BE guidelines on labelling in 2015. (This consequently negatively influenced the dialogue between the EU and the Israeli government which was felt important to bring the issue of demolitions to the table. The dialogue with the EU was one-sidedly stopped by the Israeli government in December 2017.)
- <sup>56</sup> The labelling was warning companies but was not binding up till October 2019. In that year a decision of the EU courts unexpectedly condemned the fact that imported wines from the Golan Heights were not labelled correctly. This decision created a precedent and made the labelling guidelines binding for companies and importers thus creating more opportunities for asks for enforcement. However, control on the labelling remained out (as is the situation up to date): although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Development were convinced of the idea, the issue appeared to be very complex and BE administration (economics, trade, finances) were not able to deploy sufficient capacity given the small portion of trade with Israel.
- <sup>57</sup> Building further on the Coalition agreement, Minister Wilmès made a political statement<sup>17</sup> in November 2021 on stricter control on products from settlements. This is important because these kind of statements on the differentiation policy are rare and, in the past, were not coming from MR: between 2015 and 2018, the issue was only debated in the parliament with (almost weekly) questions by Vooruit, Ecolo, Groen, PS and sometimes CD&V. Offended by the statement by Wilmès, the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Idan Roll refused to meet the Minister and Belgian parliamentarians during his visit to Belgium in the same month. The debate in BE continued and various political parties (again Groen, Ecolo and CD&V) in the parliament (December 2021) called for more severe measures and banning of products. MR and Open VLD were not fully against but tempered the discussion and Minister Wilmès was not willing to go that far at that time. Next steps have been taken by 11.11.11. (see case on Interkabinettenwerkgroep in the evaluation report for 11.11.11.).

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.cncd.be/Colonies-israeliennes-la-Belgique?lang=fr> and <https://www.dekamer.be/FLWB/PDF/55/2294/55K2294017.pdf>

- <sup>58</sup> The text in the coalition agreement was in support of several positions of Oxfam related to differentiation and forced displacement (see in the above):
- Differentiation: ‘De regering zet verdere stappen inzake een **bilateraal en multilateraal differentiatiebeleid** ten opzichte van de Israëlische nederzettingen’.
  - Force displacement: ‘De regering zal op multilateraal en EU-vlak, of desgevallend met een significante groep gelijkgezinde staten, werken aan een lijst van effectieve en proportionele **tegenmaatregelen** ingeval van een Israëlische **annexatie** van Palestijns gebied en aan de mogelijke en **tijdige erkenning van de Palestijnse staat**’
- <sup>59</sup> This result in Belgium was strongly appreciated by some Oxfam affiliates in countries where the debate is less strong or not possible.
- <sup>60</sup> This was the result of a strong collaborative effort between Oxfam, CNCD/11.11.11. and Broederlijk Delen. The input of Oxfam was the following:
- 2018: input for a resolution proposed by Wouter De Vriendt (Groen).
  - The 2019 court decision would have gone unnoticed were it not for the fact that Oxfam Solidariteit gave rumour to it: at that time (November 2019), Oxfam Solidariteit organised a lobby tour for OPTI partners on agriculture visiting Germany, The Netherlands and Belgium (with the support of Danida) and decided to use the European court decision to organise a press conference to make sure that decision makers at the BE level would be aware of the meaning of this decision. A European lobbyist (M. Koneckny from EUMEP) started mapping infringements on labelling which was a great help to continue the advocacy.
  - June, 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020 a webinar<sup>18</sup> was organised on annexation with the Middle East platform where Oxfam took the lead and invited also partners to speak (including partners from Broederlijk Delen and Solsoc).
  - Oxfam collaborated with CNCD and 11.11.11. on a lobby note with view to the new government but (according to the tracker) did not engage in personal contacts with political parties. Input provided by the ‘background note on settlement trade’ from November 2019.
- <sup>61</sup> In 2021, Oxfam did not play an important role in the lobby as there was no staff during half of the year, lobby was primarily done by CNCD and BD. According to Oxfam, a new push/momentum for change also came with the escalation of the violence in Gaza in May 2021. More decision makers understood that the annexation policy of Israel was at the basis of the conflict and this played a role in the statement of Wilmès making the issue more debatable. The evaluators were not able to confirm this. An important role for continuing advocacy on the settlement trade was played by 11.11.11. and the (European) coalition coordinated by 11.11.11 of ‘Don’t buy into occupation’.
- <sup>62</sup> The ask for a ban on products or for refraining from financial involvement in the settlements has always been a delicate one for Oxfam. Oxfam US did not want to support asks for this and the alternative was to focus on labelling as this emphasises the consumer perspective rather than blaming/damaging Israel through a boycott. The idea was that consumers have a right to know where the products come from. As such, Oxfam Solidariteit remained somewhat in the background in the advocacy process but was nevertheless able to

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<sup>18</sup> Webinar organised by ME Platform, Oxfam took the lead.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ge\\_KKPo5aU&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR36xsrxKAAtwskhKJV04iuzFluvJ3IbgKpxjw3N23TieGCpAX-uVP3BIAJM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ge_KKPo5aU&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR36xsrxKAAtwskhKJV04iuzFluvJ3IbgKpxjw3N23TieGCpAX-uVP3BIAJM)

influence thanks to the synergy with other Belgian partners, such as CNCD and 11.11.11. who share similar positions.

### 3.3.3. CASE III: CHALLENGING CGRS CRITERIA FOR REFUGEES FROM GAZA IN 2019 – PERFORMANCE STORY

- <sup>63</sup> This change is considered to be a milestone in the lobby for lifting the blockade on Gaza by underlining the hopelessness for the whole of Gaza and its population. The process was fuelled by the first big protests in Gaza with many youngsters being killed (March 2018). The rules with regards to asylum for Palestinians from Gaza change regularly since 2016 based on a complex interplay between the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS)/ Commissariaat-generaal voor de Vluchtelingen en de Staatlozen (also CGVS) and CALL (Council for Alien Law Litigation)/ Raad voor Vreemdelingenbetwistingen (or RvV).

#### Performance story

- <sup>64</sup> In this particular case, CALL supported (November 2019) a CGRS decision stating that refugees from Gaza, registered at UNWRA can return to Gaza as the border in Egypt re-opened, UNRWA is operational and although the security situation is precarious, this needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. This led to a parliamentary question by ECOLO (January 21<sup>st</sup> 2020) in which the disastrous living conditions for all Gazan people was underlined and the threat of a humanitarian crisis, which was confirmed by the answer of Minister Goffin, and yet the Minister of Migration was discouraging the refugees to apply. The situation of refugees was put back on the agenda in a parliamentary discussion the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2020 when Minister Goffin recognised that Belgium should provide further support to UNRWA and that the issue of the refugees needs a just solution. Again in April 2020 various questions were asked in the parliament that addressed the issue of COVID in Gaza and difficulties of addressing this in an appropriate way given the blockade and the financial limitations of UNWRA to manage with the available funding.
- <sup>65</sup> Oxfam used the framing of hopelessness/no perspective for the first time deliberately in 2018 when providing input for parliamentary questions by CD&V (Vincent van Peteghem) and VOORUIT (Dirk van der Maelen) in response to the context of the Gaza uprising in March 2018 (together with 11.11.11.).
- <sup>66</sup> Another way of advocating for the issue by through ensuring input for lobby documents and contacts with press. Oxfam, has been documenting the impact of the blockade on Gaza for years and undertook various activities in March 2018 to bring the situation under the attention of decision makers, amongst which a document examining the impact on DGD funded programmes (October 12<sup>th</sup> 2017)<sup>19, 20</sup> In 2018 most of the Oxfam communication was done indirectly by supporting 11.11.11., CNCD and the Federal Platform (April-May 2018) in their communication products:
- in April Oxfam provided input for a Q&A of 11.11.11. on the Great Return March and signed statement by the Federal platform for the Middle-East (on demonstration is a right);

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<sup>19</sup> A CLOSER VIEW ON GAZA'S MOST RECENT ELECTRICITY CRISIS. Examining the impact on DGD funded programs and partners.

<sup>20</sup> Support of Oxfam to another lobby paper in collaboration with Gazan partners for the The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) did not resonate in Belgium. The AHLC is a body whose primary function is to coordinate the delivery of international aid to Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority. It normally meets twice a year usually in New York or Brussels.

- beginning of May, Oxfam provided input and signed a lobby note by CNCD that received attention in Le Soir;
- Oxfam provided a statement and coordinated the process for a joint statement signed by 8/10 youth presidents of pol parties on youth in Gaza on May 15th (coordination and content) of the following political families (Vooruit/PS, Open VLD/Défi Jeunes, CD&V/CDH, Groen/Ecolo) and published in the Knack and Le Soir;.
- Oxfam took the lead to a policy note on background of the issue by 11.11.11., CNCD and Broederlijk Delen destined to the press; this received a follow-up by Oxfam with phone calls to SPA, mails with PS, meeting with CD&V for exploring the possibility to introduce parliamentary questions.
- in collaboration with Oxfam Solidariteit, Oxfam managed to get an interview with the Oxfam OPTI director on air in De Ochtend (VRT).

<sup>67</sup> In 2019, it was harder to mobilise around the issue of Gaza after the decision of CALL. At this time, Oxfam was more pro-active and vocal on the matter and produced an opinion article Oxfam on the return policy, which was published on the website of national newscasting broadcasting (VRT, Nov 29<sup>th</sup> 2019)<sup>21</sup>. Oxfam also invested in follow-up of this article with ECOLO leading to questions from MP Simon Moutquin in the federal parliament (January 21<sup>st</sup> 2020) – see in the above.

Case	Type of causal mechanism	Mechanism
<b>Case III: CGRS criteria for refugees from Gaza challenged in 2019-2020</b>	Primary explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opinion article and other documents on the actual situation in Gaza</li> <li>- Fuelling attention in press by bilateral contacts with journalists</li> <li>- Collaboration with lawyers: providing them with further information on the situation on the ground</li> </ul>
	Commingled rival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Briefing with 11.11.11. of MP (CD&amp;V and Vooruit)</li> <li>- Debate in parliament and input from CD&amp;V and VOORUIT(2018)</li> <li>- Briefing of ECOLO and debate (2020)</li> </ul>
	Influencing factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gaza Uprising</li> </ul>
	Direct rival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CALL litigations</li> <li>- Vluchtelingenwerk vlaanderen/Cire</li> </ul>

Case	Contribution by Oxfam: high, medium, low (++) or (+) is proof of the claim (linked to primary and commingled mechanisms)
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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2019/11/28/een-retourtje-gaza/>

	(--) or (-) is proof that weakens the claim (linked to rival mechanisms and external factors)
<b>Case III: CGRS changed criteria for refugees from Gaza in 2019</b>	<p>Overall, it seems that the contribution of Oxfam to challenge the criteria for refugees from Gaza is high. The opinion article of Oxfam combined with input for a question in the parliament was necessary and sufficient to put the situation of Gaza on the agenda in that period. Normally, Oxfam feeds journalists with information but as there was no clear event, Oxfam created its own opportunity and communicated itself.</p> <p>(+) the opinion article of Oxfam in 2019 was immediately followed by a briefing of ECOLO on the issue of refugees and a question in the parliament by ECOLO. ECOLO is in contact with the Belgo-Palestinian association on the issue and also has contacts with specialised lawyers, independent from Oxfam. Also in 2018; Oxfam succeeded in putting Gaza on the agenda in the federal agenda combining press work and follow-up with politicians from VOORUIT and CD&amp;V. The framing (however not new) resonated in their questions (blockade, open air prison, lack of perspective).</p> <p>(+) the fact that Oxfam supports and underpins the lack of perspective for the people in Gaza through its press work (2018-2019) creates a narrative that supports migration lawyers to build their cases</p> <p>(+) Oxfam Solidariteit has (access to) very specific information (through Oxfam OPTI) on the situation in Gaza which is important for politicians (but was less important for the lawyers or the CGRS in this period)</p> <p>(+) the violence in Gaza does not automatically engages politicians without the extra press attention and even then, it is sometimes hard to put it on the agenda.</p> <p>(+) there was no initiative from other organisations working on refugees from Gaza in 2018-2020, such as Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen or CIRE.</p> <p>(+) Oxfam was able to work with and through activities and reports of other NGOs but took a leading role lead on Gaza and played an important role in providing content. Also Broederlijk Delen was vocal on the issue and underlined the effect of the blockade in its press releases in May 2018 ('verstikkende blokkade'), but there was no link with refugees.<sup>22</sup> Solsoc is another NGO very active on OPTI/Gaza but not on the issue of refugees.</p> <p>(-) Oxfam providing information for the Council: although some respondents question the independence of CGRS (absence of political influence is questioned), the evaluators did not come across evidence that Oxfams' work has been influencing them. The Council is ensuring regular updates and is looking for information. Their main sources are the International Crisis Group and Le Monde. The country reports of CGRS do not refer to Oxfam in their bibliography but do refer to Gisha, an Israeli NGO working on human rights and partner of Oxfam. CGRS decisions on refugee status can be challenged by CALL, which happened in February 2021 when CALL stated that the difficulties UNRWA is currently facing makes the protection and assistance it is supposed to offer to refugees in Gaza ineffective and thus it is important to grant them the refugee status.</p>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2018/05/15/opinie-lieve-herijgers-jeruzalem-gaza-broederlijk-delen/>

	(-) reports from Nansen, an organisation specialised in asylum legislation have been more important for the lawyers.
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- <sup>68</sup> Oxfam used a combination of press attention and influencing decision makers to put the issue on the political agenda and have parliamentary debate on Gaza and refugees from Gaza. The deliberate framing of the issue of Gaza in order to influence the narrative; this framing also resonated in the debate of parliament.
- <sup>69</sup> The input of Oxfam Solidariteit for MPs in 2018 focussed on lifting the blockade, the frame of no perspective and Gaza as an open prison. These positions were integrated in two parliamentary questions (May, 17<sup>th</sup> 2022). Vooruit(Dirk vander Maelen) was the one to use the word of ‘openluchtgevangenis’. The lifting of the blockade also appeared in the answer of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. During the same session, 7 questions were asked in relation to Gaza but only one (from CD&V, who were briefed by Oxfam) referred to the blockade. The focus on Gaza as an open prison, not providing any perspective in terms of economic development was well chosen because opportunities for the slightest opportunity for economic development (for some) has been an important argument in the return criteria.
- <sup>70</sup> What can be noticed is that Oxfam is trying different angles (this time a decision of the CGRS) to put the issue of the blockade in Gaza on the political agenda. This capacity should be underlined: given the general OPTI fatigue among press and decision makers, Oxfam needs to be very creative to identify and use events to tie them up with the messaging.
- <sup>71</sup> The importance of political attention for the Gazan refugees should not be underestimated. Although the CGRS is politically independent, the framing of the situation of Gaza as hopeless for the whole population in the parliament is important to support asks for lifting the blockade and ending the separation policy (on the one hand) and pleas from migration and refugee lawyers to consider the situation in Gaza as generalised (and to grant automatic refugee status to Gazan applicants). Lawyers on the issue have been using this framing for a longer time. Recent verdicts by CALL demonstrate that the situation can easily change<sup>23</sup>, sometimes to the benefit of the refugees and that ensuring constant updates of information from the ground, which is happening by one of the Oxfam partners, Gisha is important. The link between the lobby of Oxfam in 2018-2020 and the ruling of CALL in 2021 is however hard to establish in a very conclusive way by the evaluators in this case based on the evidence.
- <sup>72</sup> The access to up-to-date technical information is also important for lawyers and legal organisations. In the past (before 2017), Oxfam has been directly in touch with migration advocates and the organisation NANSEN that provides highly specialised information on asylum legislation. In 2020 NANSEN updated its analysis on Gaza<sup>24</sup> and referred to a study of Oxfam International on general vulnerability in the area.<sup>25</sup> Information from interviews confirms that the framing on generalised hopelessness (‘uitzichtloosheid’) for the whole of Gaza’s population is important when pleading for Gazans to be recognised as refugees. Detailed information coming from one of the partners of Oxfam, Gisha is considered to be key as lawyers do not have the capacity to execute in depth context analysis as the CGRS is capable of.

<sup>23</sup>Another (more recent) example is from 2021 (February and March) where CALL granted the refugee status to UNRWA-registered applicants from Gaza, stating that the difficulties UNRWA is currently facing makes the protection and assistance it is supposed to offer to refugees in Gaza ineffective.

[https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/belgium/asylum-procedure/differential-treatment-specific-nationalities-procedure/#\\_ftn5](https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/belgium/asylum-procedure/differential-treatment-specific-nationalities-procedure/#_ftn5)

<sup>24</sup> [https://nansen-refugee.be/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/TVREEMD\\_2020-03\\_NootGaza.pdf](https://nansen-refugee.be/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/TVREEMD_2020-03_NootGaza.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> OXFAM, *Responsiveness of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme to Shifting Vulnerabilities in the Gaza Strip*, mei 2020, 8, to read on <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620989/rr-responsiveness-palestinian-national-cash-programme-shifting-vulnerabilities-gaza-280520-en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>



### 3.4 OVERALL APPRECIATION OF EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT

- <sup>73</sup> To come to an overall appreciation, the evaluator has taken into account the outputs and outcomes of Oxfam, the contribution analysis and the proper progress markers identified by Oxfam in 2017<sup>26</sup>.
- <sup>74</sup> The topic of OPTI is known to be hard and frustrating. Big steps are rarely taken and the situation in the OPT is even deteriorating because of actions taken by Israel. In 2017 Oxfam determined indicators and progress markers related to change at the level of the political actors in BE ('coherent policy within Belgium's foreign policy on the OPT'), the private sector ('broader awareness of their roles and responsibilities in the context of the occupation') and the CNCD and the Middle-East Platform ('strategy and joint advocacy actions are systematically implemented'). The evaluator will comment on the changes and the contribution of Oxfam in the following paragraphs, appreciation from targets will be described and assumptions will be discussed/validated.
- <sup>75</sup> **Changes - Changes with regards to the private sector** were limited; Oxfam provided input to the Middle-East platform on economic effects of the occupation and co-financed research but was not able to start a dialogue for e.g. with supermarkets in BE (nor other MS in the framework of the confederation as far as the evaluators were able to tell from available documentation). Oxfam documents refer to little traction from the side of the retailers, already in 2018 it was clear that this change was difficult to achieve because of strong counterlobby. Divesting and banning of settlement products are still on the agenda of Oxfam Solidariteit and Oxfam has worked on this with CNCD and 11.11.11. behind the scenes and through bilateral contacts with politicians from PS, Vooruit and CD&V. Recently Oxfam is supporting a European citizen initiative that calls for a ban on settlement products by gathering 1 million signatures. This has increased pressure on discussions within the Oxfam confederation to 'move on' with the messaging on the occupation of the OPT and the settlement trade.
- <sup>76</sup> **Changes related to the work of the Middle-East platform** were partially realised. It should be noted that during the last years, the Middle-East platform became less functional and is no longer communicating as a platform. Oxfam Solidariteit however invested a lot in the coordination with CNCD and 11.11.11. The added value of Oxfam is its unique (in the platform) expertise on area C, the activities of the West Bank Protection Consortium, humanitarian aid, demolitions and Gaza and having direct information from the colleagues from the three Oxfam offices in Palestine implementing activities. Oxfam provided content and finances to at least two reports that were disseminated as reports from CNCD and 11.11.11. The investment of Oxfam Solidariteit however diminished after the advocacy officer left.
- <sup>77</sup> **Various changes in relation to realising a coherent policy within Belgium's foreign policy** on the OPT have been realised as is clear from the overview of changes in relation to the positions of Oxfam. OPTI remained on the BE political agenda between 2017 and 2021: it was subject of multiple parliamentary questions on differentiation policy, Gaza (lifting the blockade and challenging criteria for refugees from Gaza), shrinking space and demolitions of infrastructure in area C, two Parliamentary resolutions were passed in 2018 on settlement trade and in 2020 on annexation (and preparation of countermeasures) and there have been statements pointing at Israel's responsibilities as occupying power by BE government at UNSC and by

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<sup>26</sup> Note of the advocacy officer of Oxfam 'Strategisch werk CG 3-OPTI'.

consecutive Ministers of Foreign Affairs in between 20 (on control of settlements products, abuse of the definition of settlement products, demolitions, ...).

<sup>78</sup> Most impressive are the fact that the coalition agreement of the current government explicitly referred to the OPT and named the responsibilities of a specific country, Israel (which is uncommon in such an agreement). Consequently, concrete steps have been taken by the federal government involving the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy to develop concrete measures to operationalise the differentiation policy and this without waiting for a joint EU initiative or even an initiative of willing states. External observers are calling this a major step in a domain where so little change is possible and situation is further deteriorating.

<sup>79</sup> **Contribution** - The contribution of Oxfam to the above mentioned changes was between medium to high. Added value of Oxfam was:

- Its capacity to give rumor to events in OPTI through the press, more in particular the capacity to identify new angles in communication to put issues on the parliamentary agenda (for eg. Gaza by using a decision of the CGRS on refugees) and the careful and effective planning of communication to alert and engage with members of parliament which was observed in the three cases. Using event and crisis to communicate and mobilize has worked well to keep the issue on the agenda.
- Content input to work of CNCD and 11.11.11. (for e.g. on settlement trade) and taking initiative with other NGOs member of the Middle East Platform (for e.g. the 2020 webinar in the federal parliament). This suffered a bit from the turn-over of staff within Oxfam and COVID (no in-person meetings).
- Engagement with members of parliament (in particular from Ecolo/Groen, Vooruit and CD&V). Some respondents want to highlight the strong intimidation coming from parties connected to the Israel state trying to prevent the members of parliament to do their work. Providing input for parliament questions has in several occasions provoked/forced the Minister for foreign affairs to be vocal in the run-up of the meetings of the UNSC creating a situation where the Minister had to repeat the same position at that level. The investment of Oxfam Solidariteit in engaging with members of parliament however diminished after the advocacy officer left (besides the 2021 Gaza lobby tour)..
- Very informal and private engagement with DGD officials (but this could not be fully validated by the evaluator by absence of key resource persons) that served (potentially) as a channel to influence MFA and Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Working at the EU level and the confederation (with the Oxfam EU office and other Oxfam affiliates). In 2019 Oxfam Solidariteit took the lead of the EU lobby which provided more insight in the European dynamics between different MS and their position on OPTI. According to Oxfam Solidariteit this facilitated coordination with Oxfam affiliates. The evaluator acknowledges that this was useful, for eg. When organizing lobby tours for partners to the EU or journalists to OPTI. The evaluator has not been able however to directly connect the interplay within the Oxfam confederation to the changes. It should be noted that although potentially impactful (see also the decision of 11.11.11. to invest in European coalitions) the Oxfam confederation is hampered by a lack of consensus on the way forward and a more activist position on the OPTI.

<sup>80</sup> **Appreciation** - From the interviews, the following **appreciation from lobby targets** and other actors can be noticed:

- Very concrete information from Oxfam can be useful to journalists and decision makers. Journalists might be less interested by readymade analysis as they want to draw their own conclusions. Decision makers

appreciate it when the advocacy respects the fact that they need to decide themselves on what measures to take, aligning with decisions in other domains.

- Officials, politicians and diplomats confirm that Oxfam has access to a lot of information. One person relates this to the Oxfam network ('it is not a small NGO'). Decision makers absolutely value field experience and capacity to gather data. At the same time, officials do not all think of Oxfam as neutral and when preparing decisions they always try to put it next to other narratives and information, more in particular from multilateral organisations. Given the sensitivity of OPTI, some respondents underline that they need to know how the partners of Oxfam position themselves in the conflict. However, they acknowledge that there is no sign that ever some information from Oxfam was not to be trusted.
- It is appreciated that the contacts and exchanges with Oxfam are always based on factual information, for eg. with regards to the demolitions or the access to water in Gaza. The information is considered to be very instructive rather than confrontational. Respondents from administration/diplomacy appreciate the fact that the narrative of Oxfam always clearly refers to international law.
- Attention for gender: this is not a strong issue in the advocacy according to respondents. They assume that gender is more addressed in the development programmes for economic development. The evaluator found 1 background document with a reference to gender (a document with talking point on demolitions and the specific effects on women and girls, for eg. their access to economic resources).
- The effectiveness of and appreciation for lobby tours and facilitating contacts for partners of Oxfam in OPTI was not raised by the respondents (but also not particularly checked by the evaluator as this was not referred to as a mechanism in the cases). From interviews, it appears that lobby tours are much appreciated by Oxfam OPTI and Oxfam partners as they provide a lot of space for them to explain their perspective and experiences towards national and European decision makers.

<sup>81</sup> **Assumptions** - The evaluators identified relevant assumptions in the technical note (start-up phase of the evaluation) which can all be fully or partially validated.

<sup>82</sup> **'We are listened to because we are trustworthy, we have access to primary data and evidence (from projects and partners)'**: this assumption can be validated. Oxfam Solidariteit has a strong profile as humanitarian organisation that works closely with partners on the ground and has its own development and humanitarian projects through which it can provide factual data on specific topics. Some of the partners Oxfam works with have been engaged in lobby tours (at BE and EU level), strengthening the trustworthiness of Oxfam. Information from the interview round by the evaluators confirmed that there is a lot of attention for aligning messages with partners, for checking information and data with the partners in Palestine and the Oxfam country office to make sure the data are updated and correct. The country office is standby to provide up to date information when there are specific debates going on in the various countries, amongst which BE. In the case of the smear campaign against NGOs, Oxfam was able to respond fast to a question of the administration to brief them on the issue.

<sup>83</sup> **'Media** can strengthen our message and/or ensure more attention to the topic': this assumption is validated. The case on Gaza demonstrates that it works to launch attention in the press and then follow-up on the topic with MPs. Politicians are sensitive to topics that receive a lot of attention in the press. Importance and effectiveness of press attention was confirmed by DGD and MFA officials, in order to alert MPs (asking questions to the Minister). The case of Gaza shows that, when it is more difficult to get a lot of media attention, Oxfam Solidariteit can be more vocal (opinion article) and create attention that helps to contact an MP. Oxfam uses moments of crisis and conflict to communicate ask for action on long

standing positions, for e.g. of BE government. This approach is recognised and supported by various respondents (amongst which Oxfam affiliates and partner) because it is so hard to keep the topic on the agenda.

- <sup>84</sup> **‘Broad support of BE NGO’s for the differentiation policy continues and makes it possible to come to joint position and demands’/‘Working together ensures more and faster access to BE decision makers as they understand that our positions are shared with many other CSOs’:** this assumption is validated. Although the Middle-East platform is no longer very functional, Oxfam engages with several other NGOs, most in particular 11.11.1. and CNCD but also with BD and Solsoc. Oxfam Solidariteit remains quite silent about a number of positions (for eg. on a ban for products from settlements or using the word Apartheid) because positions need to be aligned within the Oxfam confederation and on some positions it is not possible to find a consensus. This was holding back Oxfam from openly supporting advocacy actions and/or campaigns from 11.11.1. and CNCD. Support by Oxfam in these cases is provided by support on content, co-financing research. Evaluators however did not get the message from respondents that this has been weakening the asks of 11.11.1. and CNCD. There are two explanations: Oxfam is understood to be a member of 11.11.1. and Oxfam (and their absence is thus not noticed by BE actors) and informal and private advocacy was possible with CNCD and with 11.11.1.
- <sup>85</sup> **‘Policy makers in the government are sensitive for political pressure coming from the parliament/parliament is able to exert pressure thanks to input from Oxfam’:** this assumption has been validated. It works best in the run-up of important (international) meetings and events and demonstrates the capacity of Oxfam to plan towards events.
- <sup>86</sup> **‘NGOs as allies of administration’:** this assumption is partially validated and might be more true for the relations with DGD (but this was not fully confirmed as some key respondents were not interviewed). Informal briefings with DGD have supported officials in their advice to diplomats and/or consultation with the Ministry of foreign affairs for ex. on shrinking space. Respondents would not go that far but underline there is exchange and collaboration and that, in the end, the objectives are the same so there is no opposition. However, administration needs to thread more carefully and cannot go that far in the steps taken. Some officials (not DGD) underline that a lot of NGO influence on MPs and parliamentary questions on the topic can sometimes be overwhelming to them as they need to support the cabinet with providing the answers.
- <sup>87</sup> **‘Policy makers find it important to have access to exclusive information’:** this can be validated. Policy makers do not want to appear in parliament with the same questions, they accept to ask questions on the same topic but want to be provided with specific angles that help them to position themselves clearly.
- <sup>88</sup> **An assumption that was not validated in the case of Oxfam:** the added value of gaining public support to make change happen, although this is one of the questions guiding the humanitarian advocacy narrative (November 2020). Although press releases in leading media have a potential to reach a larger audience, the evaluators did not understand this as a way to engage the wider public but rather as a way to trigger and mobilise MPs.

## 4 APPRECIATION OF RELEVANCE AND EFFICIENCY

The evaluators find that the selection of Oxfam topics and way of working is relevant. Choices are informed by (and are in line with):

- A **power analysis** mainly at the level of the EU (2016), that determines positions of the Oxfam confederation on the annexation policy in the West Bank, implementing territorial differentiation, challenging Israel's separation policy, and challenging the shrinking civil society space. Targets and advocacy opportunities are described, including a list of targets in Belgium with the key blockers at that time such as MR, Ministry and Minister of Foreign affairs; parties that are less aware but open to influence such as the Belgian Embassy in Israel, parties that are aware of the issues, such as the cabinet of the prime minister (wanting to pay more attention to youth) and actors that are championing the positions of Oxfam, such as DGD and the Minister for Development cooperation that are funding programmes of Oxfam that challenge land annexation, forcible transfers of population and separation policy in Gaza, the Consulate General of Belgium in Jerusalem and the green and socialist parties. From the evaluation it is clear that Oxfam has focused on the latter two and this approach remained the same throughout the programme, except with a shift in targets including CD&V, which demonstrates monitoring of opportunities.
- A **strong foundation** (confirmed in the humanitarian advocacy document of November 2021) starting from three key strategies which are: ensuring that donors act along the lines of good humanitarian donorship and principles, calling upon states to implement a coherent policy and to tackle root causes of humanitarian crisis such as conflict, climate change and inequality. Oxfam Solidariteit adheres to this and this **ensures coherence** in the advocacy of Oxfam even when reacting to events, always using these as opportunities to share the same messages.
- The **overall strategy is defined in OPTI**. Monthly calls with all OPTI advocacy officers and Oxfam OPTI (sometimes with participation of partners). The **perspective of partners** and their asks receives spaces and Oxfam Solidariteit is facilitating their visibility at and contact with decision makers at the EU level.
- At least one **yearly update** of 'talking points'/update of issues always in consultation with Oxfam OPT
- Even when starting from a pre-defined strategy, Oxfam has always been **adapting and was ready to grasp opportunities** for communication, mobilization and collaboration.
- The focus from 2021 onwards in relation to OPTI will be: to stimulate BE government to come up with a list of countermeasures to counter the ongoing de facto annexation (targeting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the BE representation to the EU) and the challenging of the nocontact policy and separation policy towards Gaza (targeting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and DGD). **The focus is relevant:** the first issue is clear follow-up of the resolution from Ecolo/Groen and PS of June 2020 and responds to the constant imminent threat of annexation, the attention for Gaza is relevant as it will fit into a general campaign that Oxfam OPT would like to roll out with view to the 15th anniversary of the Gaza blockade in June 2022. Particular attention will go to specific import and export restrictions on products for and from Gaza, as well as restrictions on movement of people to and from Gaza.

<sup>89</sup> **Collaboration with Oxfam affiliates** - The policy influencing work on OPTI is developed within the confederation with a leading role for the Oxfam country office in OPTI. Their 4 year influencing strategy is

leading but always needs to be signed off by the confederation (and 21 directors). The new strategy was not yet shared with the evaluator as it was not signed off at the time this report was concluded. The main goal is to ensure that the voice of local partners is integrated in communication and that advocacy asks are amplified in the countries of Oxfam affiliates.

- <sup>90</sup> At the same time the OPTI country office is there to support the affiliates in ad hoc developments and parliamentary debates in their countries that were not anticipated. A concrete example is the participation of Oxfam OPTI in briefings with DGD providing examples of impact of shrinking space in OPTI for civil society organisations (more in particular accusations on diversion of funds to finance terrorism) expecting that this information will provide input for the BE position at EU level when investigations on aid diversion at that level will be shared (which was not yet the case mid April 2022).<sup>27</sup>
- <sup>91</sup> Oxfam OPTI organises regular/monthly calls with the 10 Oxfam affiliates working on OPTI in order to exchange information and coordinate and also involves partners in these calls. Additional contact is taking place in the framework of particular projects. The EU office is always present at these calls which ensures that all levels and countries can be aligned and act together. An example of the mobilisation capacity of the confederation was demonstrated in the summer of 2020 when there was an imminent threat for annexation (see also press release<sup>28</sup>). It might again be demonstrated in June 2022 with a campaign on the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gaza Blockade. Oxfam Solidariteit is seen to have played a major role supporting the Oxfam EU office (also in terms of seconding staff) and has always been present in advocacy efforts towards EU actors (decision makers and structures) and there is effort to 'bundle' issues (OPTI and others) when meeting with staff of EEAS and other EU structures and officials. Also lobby tours with partners from OPTI and organised/coordinated by Oxfam Solidariteit always have a European dimension.
- <sup>92</sup> There is a close collaboration between Oxfam OPTI and Oxfam Solidariteit, more in particular on the topics of annexation (and demolitions), Gaza (movement of people and good and economic development) and civic space. Oxfam Solidariteit is considered to be a strong ally within the confederation and very active, it is seen to have well established contacts with parliament and government and is able to quickly respond when issues emerge, news is always promptly shared. Oxfam OPTI also develops direct links with representatives of BE government in OPTI, but Oxfam Solidariteit rarely engages with partners without including Oxfam OPTI. Oxfam Solidariteit has been seen to take a leading role on OPTI in the confederation, it provides extra capacity for Oxfam OPTI on a regular basis (for e.g. for executing a campaign, developing policy documents, etc) and for Oxfam International with input for developing policy lines.
- <sup>93</sup> The 4 year strategy for influencing policies on OPTI is not yet signed off. Overall, decision making within the confederation takes time. But there is an additional problem which is the fact that there is no consensus between the affiliates about the objectives, the actions and topics, the messaging and the language used. More in particular the ask for sanctions and the word Apartheid pose a problem. A minority of affiliates (but important in terms of financial support to OPTI, such as Oxfam US, Canada and Germany) see huge risks in engaging to openly with asks for accountability and sanctions and campaigning using the word Apartheid. The perceived risk is that of: losing donors and public support, and being attacked by the public or specific groups and last but not least, the risk of losing access to a specific party or decision maker. The risk that projects on the ground might be negatively affected was not mentioned, in fact respondents state that the difference in vision does not hamper the work on the ground with the partners. And, these partners can be engaged in private lobby (preferred over campaigning) which can eventually increase pressure from decision makers in EU and other countries on Israel. The risk-averse affiliates operate as watch dogs within the

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<sup>27</sup> This happened with regards to smear campaign of the Israeli government towards 6 NGOs condemned of financing terrorism. Belgium was not convinced by the accusations because of lack of proof and decided not to halt its financial support, to UAH for example, but was less outspoken in its communication (for e.g. compared to Denmark) which was a bit disappointing. Also Oxfam was not very vocal following a decision of Oxfam International Head of communication.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.oxfamsol.be/nl/oxfam-reactie-op-de-aankondiging-van-de-illegale-annexatie-door-israel-van-delen-van-de-westelijke>

confederation. A discussion on the strategy and appropriateness of current procedures to decide upon messaging and language is ongoing and has created serious tension in the confederation. Key is the question on the ToC: what is needed to move Israel to change?

<sup>94</sup> This means that other affiliates, such as Oxfam Solidariteit and Oxfam Ireland, are held back in their positions and in engaging asks from other Belgian organisations and coalitions. Oxfam OPTI and Oxfam Solidariteit clearly want to take on a more activist position; the recently launched citizen initiative, also supported by 11.11.11., CNCD and Broederlijk Delen and others was also signed by Oxfam causing discussion within the confederation.<sup>29</sup> The negative effect on the advocacy capacity of civil society organisations in Belgium is not disastrous as Oxfam is providing a lot of silent support, but more would be possible also at the EU level if the Oxfam confederation could take on a different approach. One respondent stated that Palestinian partners sometimes experience a lack of support.

<sup>95</sup> **Collaboration within Oxfam Solidariteit** – The advocacy on OPTI is strongly aligned with the management of the development and humanitarian programmes in OPTI which are combined in the person of the advocacy officer. There is no regular interaction on the topic with the campaigning officer of Oxfam nor with the communication officers (besides collaboration on opinion articles<sup>30</sup>). Over the past years, Oxfam Solidariteit did not engage in campaigns on OPTI and as such, the interaction with the campaigning team was not indicated. The press relations on OPTI are managed by the OPTI media lead and the advocacy advisor. Information from the website seems to suggest that starting from 2019 Oxfam has paid some attention to press releases based on content provided by Oxfam OPTI and published in Dutch and in French. Press releases always refer to information coming from partners (and these are also proposed as spokesperson for the press). Contacts with press are supported by documents with Q&A.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://elsc.support/news/a-new-european-citizens-initiativenbsp> : Oxfam is mentioned as organisation that has signed the petition

<sup>30</sup> It was however difficult to check media hits as OPTI falls under 'Rights in Crisis': hits have to be checked manually to see which ones concern OPTI

## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

<sup>96</sup> **Effectiveness and impact** - Notwithstanding the difficult context of the advocacy on OPT and the limited space for Oxfam Solidariteit to move within the confederation on the topic, Oxfam Solidariteit, together with CNCD and 11.11.11, Solsoc and BD succeeded throughout the whole programme period to put and keep various asks related to the OPTI on the BE political agenda, to influence BE government positions at international level and influence on a breakthrough related to the operationalisation of the differentiation policy in Belgium (which is no longer hiding behind the alleged necessity to have a European position first). In the case of Gaza very little was moving though.

<sup>97</sup> In comparison to the main indicators and progress markers that Oxfam Solidariteit has put forward itself in 2017 in relation to OPTI, the evaluators find that:

- **changes with regards to the private sector** were limited (due to a strong counterlobby) but that divesting and banning of settlement products remained (and remains) on the agenda of Oxfam Solidariteit. Oxfam has worked on this with CNCD and 11.11.11. behind the scenes and through bilateral contacts with politicians from PS, Vooruit and CD&C with some success.
- **Changes related to the work of the Middle-East platform** were partially realised. Partially because over the course of the years, the Middle-East platform became less functional and Oxfam Solidariteit invested more in the coordination and interaction with CNCD and 11.11.11. at least between 2017 and first half of 2020. This worked well even though the lack of consensus on OPTI within the confederation does not allow Oxfam to be more openly supportive.
- **Various changes in relation to realising a coherent policy within Belgium's foreign policy** on the OPT have been realised. OPTI remained on the BE political agenda between 2017 and 2021: it was subject of multiple parliamentary questions on differentiation policy, on Gaza (lifting the blockade and challenging criteria for refugees from Gaza), on shrinking space and on demolitions of infrastructure in Zone C. Two Parliamentary resolutions were passed, one in 2018 on settlement trade and in 2020 on annexation (and preparation of countermeasures) and there have been statements pointing at Israel's responsibilities as occupying force by BE government at UNSC and by consecutive Ministers of Foreign Affairs between 2019 and 2021 (on control of settlements product, abuse of the definition of settlement products, demolitions, ...).

<sup>98</sup> The evaluator did not come across particular unforeseen effects as a result of the advocacy work.

<sup>99</sup> The contribution of Oxfam to the above mentioned changes was between medium to high. Oxfam was mostly pro-active in its humanitarian advocacy and advocacy on OPTI took a large part of the contacts with decision makers. Although difficult to ask for media attention for OPTI and GAZA, Oxfam succeeded in contacting leading (written) press both in the French speaking and Flemish speaking part of the country.

<sup>100</sup> The ToC (at least for the BE part) can be validated. The assumptions underpinning the Theory of Change were largely validated and support the strategies chosen by Oxfam Solidariteit. Important to highlight in relation to the added value of Oxfam Solidariteit is the following:

- For other Belgian NGOs: the expertise on area C, information about the activities of the West Bank Protection Consortium, expertise on humanitarian aid, demolitions and Gaza.



- Capacity to influence statements of BE government during international meetings through input to media followed by or combined with insider advocacy (private and personal) with DGD officials and MPs. This is also thanks to good planning (timely action is taken).
- Access to DGD as beneficiaries. Very informal and private engagement with DGD officials as responsible donors that served (potentially) as a channel to influence MFA and Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs (which were more difficult to influence)
- Its capacity to use events and crisis to mobilize press and its capacity to search for and identify new angles for communication in order to put issues on the parliamentary agenda, thereby always remaining coherent with the initial strategy and the longer-term perspective (for e.g. use the moments to underline root causes and ask attention for these, for e.g. when connecting Gaza to Covid and health). It should also be highlighted that Oxfam Solidariteit tries to include positive elements in its communication (for e.g. in the statement on youth in Gaza, signed by the youth presidents of BE political parties).

<sup>101</sup> The effectiveness of and appreciation for lobby tours and facilitating contacts for partners of Oxfam Solidariteit in OPTI as advocacy strategy was more difficult to appreciate for the evaluator (as the focus was mainly on BE). But the tours are much appreciated by Oxfam OPTI and Oxfam partners as they provide a lot of space for them to explain their perspective and experiences towards national and European decision makers.

<sup>102</sup> Overall appreciation is expressed by lobby targets with regards to the access of Oxfam to information about the situation on the ground and the sharing through informal meetings. Decision makers absolutely value field experience and capacity to gather data. The information is considered to be very instructive rather than confrontational. Respondents from administration/diplomacy appreciate the fact that the narrative of Oxfam always clearly refers to international law. At the same time, officials do not all think of Oxfam as neutral and when preparing decisions they always try to put it next to other narratives and information, more in particular from multilateral organisations.

### <sup>103</sup> **Recommendations**

- Continue to look for important international (and EU) events to take combined action with MPs (providing input for questions) and media attention. There is a point of attention for the future. The investment of Oxfam Solidariteit in engaging with members of parliament overall diminished from the second part of 2020 onwards
- Re-invest in the engagement with CNCD and 11.11.11. In the past years Oxfam Solidariteit was a very loyal and hardworking ally of CNCD and 11.11.11. and demonstrated its capacity to provide relevant and timely input, for e.g. to push for the concretisation of the differentiation policy at BE level. The humanitarian angle of Oxfam Solidariteit is quite specific and represents a unique voice in the lobby.
- Some politicians might be interested in receiving in a more systematic way very detailed and factual information about effects of the annexation and separation policy on women and girls. The evaluator notices that gender is hardly touched upon in the parliament debate on OPT.

<sup>104</sup> **Relevance and efficiency** – The evaluator underlines relevance of the advocacy but appreciation of efficiency is mixed. The advocacy topics are in line with/based on good analysis and include sufficient attention for root causes. A power analysis supports the choice to work in BE with DGD officials and MPs as the MFA is more difficult to influence. Increased attention to include MPs from CD&V demonstrates capacity of Oxfam

Solidariteit to monitor opportunities; CD&V MPs share with Oxfam Solidariteit the attention for human rights. The advocacy agenda is defined on the ground in the OPT and takes into account the perspective of partners which strengthens its relevance. Advocacy points are yearly updated. Oxfam has planned to ensure follow-up of the steps taken on annexation and more in particular the concrete preparation of counter measures and its work on Gaza remains relevant with a bigger campaign planned by Oxfam OPT around the anniversary of the Blockade.

- <sup>105</sup> The evaluator appreciates the very good interaction between Oxfam Solidariteit and Oxfam OPTI. Within the confederation, Oxfam Solidariteit positions itself as a close ally of Oxfam OPT, very active and appreciated for its effective advocacy by other affiliates. Given the difficulty to move Israel to change its policies, the constant pressure on governments to condemn Israel's actions is of utmost importance. One respondent stated that she can measure the increasing stress of Israeli government about steps taken by the BE government by the increase in intimidation on MPs in Belgium.
- <sup>106</sup> Although Oxfam Solidariteit follows the lead of Oxfam OPT, the OPTI country office is always there to support affiliates, such as Oxfam Solidariteit when specific issues come up or to respond to questions from DGD (see for e.g. briefing on shrinking space).
- <sup>107</sup> The confederation has important mobilisation capacity to address imminent threat (see for e.g. 2020 and forced annexation). The evaluator however finds that full potential of the confederation may not have been fully exploited. The evaluator has not been able to directly connect the interplay within the Oxfam confederation to the changes in Belgium. It should be noted that although potentially impactful (see also the decision of 11.11.11. to invest in European coalitions) the Oxfam confederation is hampered by a lack of consensus on the way forward and a more activist position on the OPTI that allows more open support for partner NGOs and other organisations in BE.
- <sup>108</sup> The alleged risks that withhold for eg. Oxfam Canada, US and Germany to be more supportive for stronger advocacy initiatives and positions are mainly related to public damage and loss of political contacts to engage in dialogue with Israel. Given the current deterioration in the OPTI and the actions of Israel, one might ask if the risks of not being more activist are not bigger?

<sup>109</sup> **Recommendations**

- The evaluator tends to support a more activist approach for the Oxfam confederation that is currently under discussion. Given the difficulty to bring the OPTI to the attention of press and general OPTI fatigue, it might be interesting to explore how OPTI could be connected to other topics in order to find unexpected allies. Depending on the outcome of the discussion within the confederation, a closer collaboration between the OPTI advocacy officer and the campaigners of Oxfam (who are not involved now and prefer it that way given the little manoeuvring space there is in relation to OPTI) might lead to developing alternative pathways that also succeed in mobilising the public (beyond decision makers).
- The contact and product tracker is a valuable tool to monitor the policy work. The analysis of the data however might receive more attention. It is possible that over the years, the advocacy topic on OPTI was somehow isolated in Oxfam Solidariteit as it is so specific. This might explain that the evaluator did not find a trace of analysis or discussion on the specific changes (which is said to have been organised twice a year).

## 5 ANNEXES

- Annex 1: Terms of Reference
- Annex 2: List of people consulted – the list of respondents is known to Oxfam
- Annex 3: List of documents consulted
- Annex 4: interview guidelines

## ANNEX 1: TOR OXFAM SOLIDARITEIT OXFAM SOLIDARITEIT

### Terms of Reference Oxfam Solidariteit DGD OS3 Advocacy

September 2021

Terms of reference	
Programma	DGD – OS3 – Fiscaliteit – Klimaat – Midden-Oosten
Geographical coverage:	België
Program lifespan	Januari 2017 - December 2021
Program/project budget	2.146.296 (totaal OS3)
Evaluation budget	23.100 (11.550 in 2018 en opnieuw in 2021) – TBC voor evaluatie Midden-Oosten
Evaluation commissioning manager	Anke Leflere
Evaluation manager	Anke Leflere

### Background, rationale and purpose of the evaluation

In kader van ons **DGD-programma 2017-2021 voor Specifieke Doelstelling 3 mbt beleidsbeïnvloeding** organiseren we een externe evaluatie om ons advocacy-werk te evalueren, in lijn met de richtlijnen van DGD tav evaluaties. Deze evaluatie dient te gebeuren volgens de OESO-DAC-criteria.

Omdat alle ngo's die gefinancierd worden door DGD zo een evaluatie moeten doen, is er afgesproken dat 11.11.11 de lead neemt om een **gezamenlijke evaluatie** op te zetten waaraan verschillende ngo's deelnemen (11.11.11 – klimaatrechtvaardigheid; Caritas – migratie; Broederlijk Delen – Midden Oosten; Oxfam Solidariteit – fiscaliteit en financing for development), om te zorgen dat de contacten naar beleidsmakers coherent gebeuren en om de respons-rate van beleidsmakers te verhogen, omdat verschillende ngo's met dezelfde doelgroepen op beleidsvlak werken. Deze evaluatie wordt uitgevoerd door het consortium HIVA-ACE Europe. Zij gebruiken de methodologie die is uitgewerkt door Syspons in kader van de impactevaluatie klimaatrechtvaardigheid voor het leertraject georganiseerd door de Dienst Bijzondere Evaluatie.

We willen deze evaluatie gebruiken om in de eerste plaats **lessen te trekken voor heel het advocacy-departement**, en hopelijk om uitwisseling op niveau van de sector te vergemakkelijken. Deze informatie zal aangevuld worden met monitoringsgegevens die over al ons thema's gaan, om op deze manier maximale transparantie te geven aan zowel onze donoren als de mensen waarmee we werken.

### Specific object and objectives of the evaluation

We willen ons beleidsbeïnvloedend werk omdat:

- Oxfam wil bijleren over “good practices” inzake haar advocacy-werk, om zo de kwaliteit van haar werk te verbeteren, over het advocacy-werk.
- De conclusies en de aanbevelingen van deze evaluaties zullen de planningscyclus en aanpak voor DGD 2022-2026 voeden.

- We willen verantwoording afleggen aan DGD voor behaalde resultaten ikv OS3 van ons DGD-programma.

## Key questions of the evaluation

Deze evaluatie dient te gebeuren volgens de OESO-DAC criteria. Binnen dit kader focussen we op 4 specifieke criteria.

### a. Impact:

- Wat voor veranderingen zien we in beleid? Hoe uit zich dit?
- Welke onvoorziene effecten zijn er door ons advocacy-werk?

### b. Effectiviteit:

- Klopt onze Theory of Change?
- Wat was de bijdrage van Oxfam aan mogelijke verandering?
- Waarom willen beleidsmakers en journalisten met ons praten? Wat vinden beleidsmakers en journalisten de meerwaarde van Oxfam?
- Waarom pikken beleidsmakers en journalisten sommige van onze thema's op?
- Wanneer bieden we het best de input aan politici? Welk soort input (twitter, meeting, mail, briefing...) heeft het meest impact voor beleidsmakers?
- Welke lessen moeten we meenemen voor ons advocacy-werk in zijn geheel?

### c. Relevantie:

- Hoe identificeren we beter thema's en dossiers om aan te werken?

### d. Efficiëntie:

- Hoe kunnen we de mix van advocacy en influencing technieken verbeteren? Zijn er alternatieven om ons efficiënter te maken?
- Hoe kunnen we short-term campagnes beter linken aan long-term advocacy-werk?
- Welke good practices kunnen we integreren zodat we kortere feedback loops hebben en korter op de bal spelen?
- Hoe kunnen we beter thema's en dossiers over de teams heen aan elkaar linken?

### Fiscaliteit:

- Werken we met de juiste actoren en netwerken? Zien we unusual suspects over het hoofd? Wanneer beslissen we om alleen te werken of om in coalitie te werken?

### Klimaat: *(to be confirmed – begin oktober)*

- Op welke manier nemen beleidsmakers en journalisten de verbinding tussen onze sub-thema's over?
- Op welke manier weten we een tegengewicht te bieden aan boodschappen van andere actoren met tegenovergestelde standpunten

### Midden-Oosten:

- Wat is de impact van beleidsverandering hier op de landen waarmee we werken? Op welke manier schatten we potentiële risico's goed in van negatieve effecten?
- Hoe betrekken we beter collega's van landenkantoren en partners in ons advocacy-werk? Op welke manieren zijn zij geëngageerd in Oxfam's boodschappen?
- Op welke manier kunnen we synergie met andere Oxfam affiliates versterken? In welke mate is ons werk afgestemd op het werk van de confederatie?

## Scope of the evaluation and approach and methods

De evaluatie dient de methodologie te hanteren van de lopende evaluatie van het beleidswerk m.b.t. het thema klimaatrechtvaardigheid (zie 'Methodological Note 'Coordination of CSO advocacy for climate justice in Belgium' 11.11.11 and CNCD/11.11.11', June 2017, van ACODEV, NGO Federatie & FIABEL). Huidig evaluatieopzet wordt maximaal in het lopende onderzoek geïntegreerd van 11.11.11. Het onderzoeksdesign bestaat uit contributie analyse en process tracing. De voorbereidende fase bestaat uit: deskstudie, interviews met beleidsmedewerkers, workshop met beleidsmedewerkers rond ontwikkeling van Theory of Change, ontwikkeling van evaluatiekader en bespreking ervan met betrokkenen van beleidsdienst.

Voor de gegevensverzameling wordt ingezet op online enquêtes en semi-gestructureerde interviews (telefonisch). Daarnaast is een studie van beleidsdocumenten (van beleidsmakers vb wetgevende initiatieven) voorzien om de mate van effectieve beleidsbeïnvloeding na te gaan.

In de fase van sense-making en rapportage ten slotte, worden voorzien: data synthese en triangulatie, een sense-making workshop, een draft-report, gevolgd door bespreking ervan en finalisatie.

## Evaluation team

Voor deze evaluatie werken we samen met het consortium HIVA-ACE Europe, dat is geselecteerd voor de gezamenlijke evaluatie door 11.11.11, in kader van het leertraject impactevaluatie van de Dienst Bijzondere Evaluatie.

### Schedule, budget, logistics and deliverables

De baseline onderzoeksopdracht wordt uitgevoerd in de periode jan.2018-eind april 2018, met oplevering van het baseline rapport tegen eind juli 2018.

De eindevaluatie moet worden uitgevoerd in de 2e helft van 2021, met oplevering van het eindrapport tegen eind februari 2022.

Het budget van de evaluatie bedraagt 23.500 euro, met 11.550 in 2018, en nogmaals een zelfde bedrag in 2021.

## Evaluation responsibilities and management arrangements

De evaluatie wordt aangestuurd door een evaluatiecomité met daarin: Liesbeth, Maaïke en Anke.

Aanspreekpunt voor deze evaluatie is: Anke Leflere

Dit evaluatiecomité heeft als rol om:

- Contract op te maken en betalingen te voorzien
- Een eerste interview met de consultant te voorzien ter introductie
- Ondersteuning en participatie te organiseren van een TOC-workshop
- Alle benodigde input ter beschikking stellen van de evaluator
- Lijst met contacten voorzien en contacten faciliteren indien nodig
- Eerste versie en finale versie van het evaluatierapport te lezen
- Q-check en managementrespons voor de evaluatie te voorzien
- Debriefing sessie voorzien

De evaluator heeft als opdracht om:

- De evaluatie uit te voeren zoals beschreven in het contract en in de TOR.
- Indien er een probleem is, Oxfam Solidariteit op de hoogte te stellen.
- Gegevens ter beschikking gesteld door Oxfam of uit de evaluatie confidentieel te houden.

## Dissemination strategy, plan and responsibilities for sharing and using the findings.

Oxfam Solidariteit plaatst al haar evaluaties en de managementrespons op haar website. Eveneens doen wij van elke evaluatie systematisch een Quality-check, die wordt gedeeld met de Oxfam confederatie.

Specifiek voor deze evaluatie voorzien wij een debriefing sessie voor ons advocacy-departement. Het evaluatiecomité is verantwoordelijk voor het opstellen van een managementrespons en de implementatie hiervan.

## Recommended outline of an evaluation report

### **1. cover page clearly identifying the report as an evaluation and stating:**

- evaluation title
- Program/project title /affiliate identification code
- Geographical coverage: global;region; country(ies)
- date that the evaluation report was finalised
- evaluator(s) name(s) and logo (if available)
- Oxfam logo (unless not appropriate)
- appropriate recognition of institutional donor support.
- Clear statement in case this report can NOT be used externally

### **2. Table of contents**

### **3. Glossary**

### **4. List of abbreviations.**

### **5. Executive summary that can be used as a stand-alone document**

### **6. Introduction, stating objectives of the evaluation and evaluation questions**

### **7. The intervention and context**

### **8. Methodology, including an indication of any perceived limitations of the evaluation**

### **9. Presentation of the findings and their analysis**

### **10. Conclusions**

### **11. Learning and Recommendations**

### **12. Appendices:**

- Terms of reference
- Evaluation program (main features of data and activities carried out).
- A list of interviewees (name, function and working environment) and places visited.
- List of documents and bibliography used.
- Details on composition of evaluation team (names, nationality, expertise, working environment).
- **Link** to Methodological appendices:
  - ✓ The evaluation proposal
  - ✓ Evaluation instruments such as questionnaires and interview guides
  - ✓ Data collected

END





## **ANNEX 2: LIST OF PEOPLE CONSULTED**

List is known with 11.11.11 and Oxfam Solidariteit

## ANNEX 3: LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

- DGD Programme 2017-2021 Oxfam Solidariteit
- Note of the advocacy officer of Oxfam 'Strategisch werk CG 3-OPTI'.
- Outputs Oxfam (Oxfam Solidariteit) and contact tracker
- Oxfam (November 2020) Humanitarian Advocacy 2021. Internal note
- Oxfam (2017) Power Analysis, the EU and the OPTI. Internal and confidential
- Oxfam (2017) strategisch werk CG 3 – OPTI. Internal note
- Oxfam (2018) Monitoring doelstellingen OBE advocacy mbt OPTI. Internal note.
- OXFAM, Responsiveness of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme to Shifting Vulnerabilities in the Gaza Strip, mei 2020, 8, to read on <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620989/rr-responsiveness-palestinian-national-cash-programme-shifting-vulnerabilities-gaza-280520-en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Oxfam Solidariteit's press releases
- Opinion articles & website messages (<https://www.oxfamsol.be/nl/pers/persberichten> )

## ANNEX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

### Rapportering

Naam interviewer:

Datum interview:

Duurtijd interview:

Suggesties andere personen te interviewen:

Praktisch:

- Het duurt ongeveer 30 minuten.
- De verwerking van het interview is anoniem, uitspraken van individuele respondenten zullen niet herkenbaar zijn in het rapport.
- Het rapport zal gedeeld worden met Oxfam Solidariteit. Afhankelijk van de gevoeligheid van de thematiek kunnen de rapporten ook publiek gemaakt worden.

**Inleiding:** *In welke mate bent u actief bezig met het thema OPTI? Sinds wanneer?*

...

**Evoluties debat OPTI:** *Welke zijn volgens u de belangrijkste evoluties in het politieke debat en beleid?*

**Relatie met Oxfam Solidariteit:** *Kan u uw relatie met Oxfam Solidariteit beschrijven? (Op welke manier bent u in contact gekomen met Oxfam Sol? Over welke onderwerpen werd u in het bijzonder geïnformeerd? Welke informatie heeft u gekregen over OPTI)*

*Ook vragen naar 11.11.11 en andere actoren*



**Achtergrond bij de drie casussen:** *Op welke manier was u betrokken bij één van de drie casussen? Wat was uw rol of welke (beleids)acties heeft u zelf genomen mbt deze casus? Kan u in grote lijnen aangeven wat uw rol/positie in deze casus bepaald heeft of gestuurd heeft? Wat heeft aanleiding gegeven tot uw initiatieven (in brede zin)?*

**Contributie door Oxfam Solidariteit:** *In welke mate heeft de informatie en standpunten van Oxfam Sol over OPTI een rol gespeeld in uw werk binnen deze casus? Kan u concrete voorbeelden geven? Welke informatie vond u vooral waardevol en waarom?*

**Invloed van andere actoren:** *Zijn er andere actoren die de uitkomst bepaald hebben? Is er een sterke tegenlobby op dit thema en hoe gaat/ging u daarmee om (welke afwegingen maakte u)? Welke rol speelden andere actoren? Zijn er andere contextuele factoren die een rol speelden?*

**Vergelijking:** *Hoe zou u de beleidsbeïnvloeding van Oxfam Solidariteit vergelijken met de rol/werk/beleidsbeïnvloeding van andere (f)actoren? Hoe zou u de bijdrage van Oxfam Sol inschatten aan de beleidsverandering (eerder laag, middelmatig of hoog)? Waarom?*

**Invloed op beleid (om hypothesen indirect op te testen):** *Een algemenere vraag: Wanneer en hoe kunnen volgens u NGOs best wegen op uw standpuntbepaling? Welke aanpak(ken) werken het best volgens u om beleidsmakers te benaderen? Wat apprecieert u het meest? Waarom? Kunt u voorbeelden geven (gelinkt aan Oxfam Sol of andere voorbeelden)?*

**Appreciatie werk Oxfam Solidariteit:** *Hoe beoordeelt u in het algemeen het politieke werk van Oxfam Sol mbt OPTI? Wat zijn sterke kanten en wat kan verbeterd worden? (kan gaan over hoe ze contact opnemen, duidelijke boodschap hebben, hun boodschap framen, hun expertise, hun legitimiteit, hun timing...)*

**Conclusie:** *Wilt u nog iets delen dat relevant kan zijn voor onze studie? Denkt u nog aan andere contacten die we zeker moeten spreken in relatie tot deze studie?*







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