Women Leading Durable Solutions in Myanmar (WLDS)

April 2022 – March 2027

Figure 1: WLDS Project Participants, June 2025, Oxfam

Mid-Term Evaluation Report

Prepared for Global Affairs Canada

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Acknowledgements

Oxfam Canada and the report authors (independent consultants Alix Wadeson) express the deepest appreciation to all those people and communities who provided their invaluable expertise and resources to complete to design, data collection, analysis, drafting and finalization of this Mid-term Review report. It was a truly collaborative effort. This includes Oxfam in Myanmar and the WLDS' team, especially the dedicated Local Partner Organizations - Actions for Community Resilience Organization, the Rakhine Women Initiative Organization, and Yaung Chit Thit.

Most importantly, we acknowledge and deeply appreciate all of the courageous and resilient young and adult women and men in Rakhine State and the many civil society and service provider actors who gave their precious time and energy to engage. Sharing their candid perceptions and lived experiences made this evaluation possible and will also help Oxfam and WLDS partners to improve the quality of and learning from the WLDS project.

The generous financial and technical support provided for this project by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) is also recognized and highly appreciated.

The global Oxfam confederation is working with partners and allies to reimagine our partnerships and ways of working. Oxfam is actively involved in the Pledge for Change initiative that aims to rethink and decolonize the global aid system, and the confederation has committed to greater global balance by setting a goal that 70% of our net unrestricted funds are spent in implementing countries. Oxfam Canada also articulated commitments to shift power and resources in our 2021-2025 Strategic Framework.

We strive to ensure our relationships with Oxfam country offices and partners are equitable, and our ways of working recognize how power and privilege can shape that dynamic. Power relations often determine how efforts are invested, especially during reporting. To ensure we respect and maintain the integrity of what partners are telling us, we present this report edited and translated only for clarity and consistency, while highlighting and supporting the voices of our partners, the people we work with and the diverse communities we serve.

We hope this is one step in the right direction and invite GAC to join us in this ongoing and evolving process. As part of this, we request allies, donors and GAC to:

1) Respect this approach taken by Oxfam Canada, our Oxfam confederation colleagues, and partners

2) Recognize GAC and Oxfam Canada's positional power when reviewing and providing feedback

3) Work with us to collectively set agreed timeframes for report review, response to follow up questions and approval, to support timely learning and enhanced partnerships.

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Acronyms

AA	Arakan Army
ACRO	Action for Community Resilience Organization
BCC	Behaviour Change Communications
CAT4GJO	Capacity Assessment Tools for Gender Just Organization
CBO	Community-based Organization
CMC	Camp Management Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GE	Gender Equality
GLP	Gender Leadership Program
HDCO	Humanitarian and Development Coordination Office
IDP/Ps	Internally displaced people/ persons
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
INGOs	International Non-Government Organizations
MC	Male Champion
MTR	Mid-term Review
OiM	Oxfam in Myanmar
OCA	Oxfam Canada
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PMF	Project Management Framework
PDM	Post Distribution Monitoring
PMU	Project Management Unit
RCA	Rapid Care Assessment
RWIO	Rakhine Women's Initiative Organization
SAC	State Administration Council
SC	Steering Committee
ULA	United League of Arakan
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WE	Women's Empowerment
WLDS	Women Leading Durable Solution
WP	Work Plan
WR	Women's Rights
YCT	Yaung Chi Thit

Executive summary

Project Overview: Women Leading Durable Solutions in Myanmar (WLDS) is a 5-year multi-partner initiative to be implemented from April 2022 through March 2027. With a budget of CAD $8M funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC), WLDS is working to contribute to the increased empowerment of adult and young women regarding their rights, access and control of resources and decision-making power, in crisis-affected and disadvantaged areas of Rakhine State of Myanmar. Oxfam Canada (OCA) and Oxfam in Myanmar (OiM) are leading the project, working with three local partner organizations (LPOs): Yaung Chi Thit (YCT), RWIO (Rakhine Women's Initiative Organization) and ACRO (Action for Community Resilience Organization).

Methodology: A key Mid-term Review (MTR) priority is to document early signs of change for beneficiaries according to the Theory of Change and PMF outcomes, and to inform learning, planning and revisions for the remainder of the project. This evaluation was intentionally opted for a light participatory approach of a small purposive sample of qualitative Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 36 project beneficiaries from Gender Leadership (GLP), Male Champion (MC) and WASH group interventions and 7 Key Informant interviews (KIIs) with community members (2), local partners (3), and Oxfam Myanmar and Oxfam Canada staff (2) and a review of partner monitoring data. Data analysis methods of content matrix analysis, strength of evidence assessment, and rubrics were applied to triangulate evidence and develop findings for the three Theory of Change Pillars and to assess themes of project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The findings and recommendations were developed with a reasonable view of expected outcomes by April 2025 and are grounded in a realistic understanding of what is achievable considering the challenging context, operational constraints, and actual timeframe in reality that project could feasibly implement activities since the project officially began.

Context Analysis: While already a highly challenging context, conditions in WLDS target areas and the Rakhine State have worsened more since the project inception. In 2023, escalating armed conflict between the Arakan Army (AA) and Myanmar's military has transformed Rakhine State, with the AA controlling 14 of 17 townships by early 2025. Ongoing violence, expanding parallel governance structures, and military conscription targeting of Rohingya communities—especially in Sittwe—have severely disrupted daily life and humanitarian operations. Compounded by Cyclone Mocha (2023) and monsoon floods (2024), communities face severe and deteriorating health, water contamination, and food insecurity, and economic conditions with over 560,000 displaced and over 2 million people at risk of starvation as of March 2025. Economic collapse, including banking system failure, fuel shortages, and transport blockades, has obstructed aid delivery. Telecommunications blackouts in AA-controlled areas have drastically limited communications for CSOs and NGOs. This volatile, high-risk environment has significantly affected WLDS implementation, including the forced closure of 8 target camps and an estimated 10% participant attrition. Safety and access constraints required project adaptations to prioritize humanitarian needs while building awareness and skills on gender equality and women's rights content, adapted to ethnocultural and capacity differences, with stops and starts as necessary and safe.

These realities informed both project decision-making and the MTR design. The MTR explicitly accounted for contextual constraints in its methodology, findings, and recommendations, recognizing that the project's progress and adaptive strategies must be interpreted within a highly complex and fluid crisis setting and grounded in realistic expectations for impact at this stage.

Key Findings by Theory of Change (ToC) Pillar:

Despite the many challenges faced by communities and WLDS partners, and slower-than-planned implementation due to contextual volatility there are emergent positive shifts with progress achieved towards immediate and intermediate outcomes across the three ToC Pillars to different degrees. The most observable changes are found in Pillar 1 (1100), followed by Pillar 2 (1200), with much more limited scope of activities and change in Pillar 3 (1300). However, these changes are interlinked with overlap; thus, progress should be interpreted as reinforcing and combined, rather than in silos structured by PMF outcomes. The scope and depth of positive changes discussed herein were shared by a small sample of purposively selected receptive beneficiaries with varied progress and changes across target groups/areas.

The evidence collected in the MTR process and project experience and learning to date demonstrates that the level of ambition as per the original design is likely unfeasible, given the context and remaining time. Yet, the WLDS project has generated forward momentum especially in Y3, through adaptive triple nexus programming, feminist principles and leadership, and effective ways of working to collaborate, problem solve, continuously adapt in an extremely unpredictable and harsh operational climate. The following quotes provide a snapshot of the value and changes from project participants' perspectives:

"In family and community, the social norm is that it is unnecessary [for women] to work outside and should work inside of house. I got knowledge from Women Leadership in WASH sessions. I think these stereotypes changed that women could work outside and got opportunities [more] freely than before."
— Rakhine female, aged 24, WASH Group member and GLP Alumni, Min Phuu Village

"Since the [MC] dialogue sessions were held... and knowledge from it was shared among the community … [I] heard and saw other [GLP] participants sharing the knowledge gained from training sessions with women in the community." – Adult Rohingya Female, GLP Multiplier and WASH group member, Tam Bi Village

"At first, nothing was being done. The water was dirty, and water canals were blocked, which caused diseases. After joining the WASH group, I started practicing sanitation, and everything changed. I understood better how WASH can improve my life... I learned about empowerment and how women can do important work… People in the village are now supporting the WASH Group... [and] interacting more respectfully." — Adult Rakhine female, WASH Group Chairperson, Buu Ywet Ma Nyoe Village

"Before joining in WASH sessions and GLP training, women did not know to involve and participate in community activities. Now, women feel their strengths to involve and has ownership sense to attend community meetings and join regularly." — Rakhine female, aged 20, Aung Seik Village, WASH Group member and GLP Alumni

"Now, as more women join the WASH group, the men are also saying that women should participate too, whether they are educated or not." – Adult Rohingya male, WASH group member and MC Alumni, Let Taw Rei Village

ToC Pillar 1 KEQ Findings: To what extent has the project contributed to the adoption of positive social norms and behaviors towards gender equality and rights of marginalized groups among participating communities?

Evidence shows project contribution to gradual shifts in gender norms and behaviours, primarily among those directly engaged in the Gender Leadership Program (GLP), Male Champion (MC), and WASH groups. Over two-thirds of FGD participants reported changes in their households or communities, including increased male participation in domestic work, greater acceptance of women's leadership, and respectful behaviour toward women. Broader community change is indicated but remains limited and cannot yet be substantiated at scale.

Personal transformation emerged as strong outcome. Participants—especially GLP alumni—shared increased confidence, public speaking, and community engagement. MCs also reported shifts toward gender-equitable attitudes, citing reductions in emotional harassment and stronger family communication. Male gatekeeping and resistance persist, with many acknowledging the need for more male engagement and community-wide outreach. Knowledge gains were evident through the FGDs and the pre- and post-test assessments, particularly in understanding sex, gender roles, and power dynamics. Trainee feedback was overwhelmingly positive, though some literacy barriers and challenges internalizing leadership concepts were noted. Motivation to act was high. Around 80% of participants described actions promoting gender equality, including peer education, community dialogues, and role modelling. Some participants shared stories of influencing peers, spouses, and elders.

As would be expected at this stage and considering the context, widespread norm shifts will require broader coverage, sustained content dissemination, and increased male buy-in and involvement to overcome deep-rooted patriarchal norms and community resistance. Overall, the project has laid a strong foundation for behaviour change among participants, with early signals of ripple effects.

ToC Pillar 2 KEQ Findings: "How has the project supported improvement for women's access to and control over gender-responsive basic services and resources, particularly in crisis-affected and disadvantaged areas?"

Project progress and outcomes under Pillar 2 primarily advanced through gender-responsive WASH programming interventions. Women's participation in WASH groups and leadership roles fostered increased visibility, confidence, and community respect, while slowly shifting restrictive social norms. Although direct references to "control over basic services" were limited in FGDs, both male and female participants cited support for and increases in women's involvement in community and household affairs, including related to key services.

At present, progress toward all the intended outcomes remains emergent. Cyclone Mocha WASH response efforts validated WLDS' relevance and credibility with communities and the project's adaptive capacity under the triple nexus approach. Women WASH group members took active roles in hygiene campaigns and distributions, reinforcing their skills and leadership. Participatory assessments on WASH, livelihoods, protection, and rapid care represent early but critical steps toward improved gender-responsive resource access and control by women.

Training, especially the "Women's Leadership in WASH," suggests a 33% knowledge gain, and participants expressed satisfaction and intention to apply their learning. About 90% of WASH FGD participants—100% of women—reported benefits, such as influencing community hygiene practices and supporting others.

Protection-focused outcomes are pending, with key assessments completed and the more activities starting since the MTR. Some women, drawing on their WLDS experience, took initiative in addressing GBV and conflict, indicating potential for long-term change. Livelihoods surfaced as a major need and potential barrier to sustaining gains and interest in gender equality. The planned WLDS interventions for livelihoods, WASH and Protection remain critical to implement urgently, to deepen women's access, control, and leadership across these sectors and sustain overall community interest and engagement in positive social norm change efforts. Despite challenges in coverage and access, WLDS demonstrated adaptive, feminist, and needs-based implementation.

ToC Pillar 3 KEQ Findings: "What are the early signals of project contribution to impact on women's leadership and decision-making power in governance, peacebuilding, and development processes?

WLDS has contributed to early but modest gains in women's participation, leadership and decision-making power, mainly through their roles in WASH groups and GLP alumni in their households and informal roles at the community-level. Around 50% of FGD participants reported increased participation in decision-making spaces such as WASH groups, needs assessments, and public events (e.g. IWD and 16 days of activism, hygiene campaigns). Reported increases in women's confidence, knowledge, and motivation are linked to greater public engagement and semi-formal leadership roles. A few female participants shared powerful stories of leading community efforts, resolving domestic violence cases, or being elected to leadership roles—rare achievements in the Rakhine context.

The intensity of conflict, civil society restrictions, worsening humanitarian needs, and fragile governance conditions have constrained implementation and outcomes under Pillar 3 more than other Pillars. Activities were scaled back and refocused on feasible entry points. Peacebuilding efforts have taken a low-profile, indirect approach, focusing on social cohesion, due to risks. Signs of increased social cohesion and cross-ethnocultural group communications suggest early potential for contributing to indirectly fostering enabling conditions peace. Structural gender norms remain a major barrier as expected —many women still require male permission to lead or participate, and men remain gatekeepers of public authority. Capacity-building for WROs and CSOs has been largely limited to WLDS direct implementing partners to date. Still, consortium members reported improved technical, institutional, and feminist programming capacities with planned expansion of support to external community civil society groups.

Overall, WLDS has laid key foundations for women's leadership and decision making at the household and community level in a highly restrictive context and will continue to shift focus and activities under Pillar 3 for more realistic expectations of incremental and adaptive progress.

Key Findings by Evaluation Theme: The following table provides an overview of the rubric ratings provided for each of the 9 themes included in the MTR. Qualitive details and rationale for ratings are provided in the full report.

Theme	Rubric Score (1-4)
Relevance	3 - Good
Effectiveness: Program Approaches and Interventions	4 - Strong

Effectiveness: Organizational Strengthening	3 - Good
Effectiveness: Ways of Working	3 - Good
Efficiency	2 - Fair
Sustainability	2 - Somewhat likely
Impact: ToC Pillar 1	3 - Good
Impact: ToC Pillar 2	2 - Fair
Impact: ToC Pillar 3	1 - Weak

Concluding Remarks

WLDS is showing meaningful early signals of impact with notable progress for increased awareness, skills, behaviour change and positive actions for Women's Empowerment, Gender Equality and Women's Rights, especially amongst direct participants. Evidence suggests strong engagement and motivation of women and girls directly involved in the project, especially in building confidence, working to shift social norms, and accessing WASH services and increasing their role in public life and community affairs. Operational challenges have been relentless, and still remain. In the face of this unfavourable polycrisis context, the project partners have demonstrated significant resilience and adaptive capacity to continue serving disadvantaged communities in Rakhine State as much as they can. The WLDS team is committed maximizing potential for impact and is revising the work plan and project monitoring framework for quality, feasible expectations, and ethical exit plans and actions.

Summary of Lessons and Recommendations

1. **The triple nexus approach is highly relevant and necessary in the WLDS project context:** Continue this adaptive approach by prioritizing basic services, reducing data-heavy activities, and integrating Gender Equality and Women's Rights awareness across all interventions, leveraging the most capable and motivated MC, GLP, and WASH group participants to engage and influence others.

2. **WASH interventions serve as an effective entry point for building community trust, partner credibility and buy-in for Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment:** Act early to plan for WASH group sustainability, linking them to local structures and CSOs, and intentional sustainability discussions and plans with groups.

3. **WASH infrastructure and maintenance plans and the current rainy season:** Given the challenges for procuring more materials or cash for WASH needs in time for distribution during the rainy season, it seems critical that the project mobilizes for immediate WASH infrastructure and maintenance as rainy weather conditions change across communities.

4. **Addressing requests for incentives for community participation and ensuring 'do no harm'**: Provide more focused and accessible communication to communities (e.g., suited to literacy, culture and language diversities) about the rationales for not providing incentives is also advised - to increase understanding and reduce perceptions about payment to engage.

5. **Balancing high needs and coverage with feasibility and quality:** Streamline the workplan, PMF, and budget based on past implementation lessons. Focus organizational strengthening grants/support on

fewer additional WROs/CSOs to ensure quality training and mentorship within partner capacities and the time required to implement several remaining critical activities.

6. **Reframing peacebuilding, advocacy and governance approaches in context:** Continue strategic reframing of this aspect of the triple nexus as well as ToC pillar 3 and manage expectations for impact and feasibility in balance with other Pillar activities and priorities.

7. **Strong feminist leadership, collaboration and consultative partnership within the WLDS are beneficial and appreciated within the consortium:** Maintain the collaborative model while improving efficiency by balancing consultation with timely, transparent decision-making.

8. **Varied effectiveness of remote and virtual organizational capacity strengthening:** Use virtual sessions more strategically, focusing on a few priority CAT4GOs areas, realistically phasing and combining training, and advance scheduling of support from technical advisors.

9. **Dropouts are higher than anticipated due to worsening conditions and forced camp closures:** Accurately determine attrition by location to inform revised targets and consider attrition rates in the interpretation of baseline and endline data.

10. **WLDS staff participation in MTR design and data collection provided a useful opportunity to strengthen Feminist-Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (F-MEAL) practical skills:** Remaining F-MEAL plans should streamline data collection activities and reduce the data quantity to reduce burden on staff and communities and increase data accuracy and utility.

11. **Emerging but unverified differences in acceptance, engagement and progress of social norm change between diverse community groups:** Further explore these differences in F-MEAL activities, especially in endline evaluation to inform future programming strategies.

12. **"Hard things are hard" - managing expectations and timeframes for sustained impact**: Far longer-term commitments, investment, advocacy and support from the international community and donors are essential to sustain and grow impact during (and beyond) WLDS in the face of increasing threats to human rights, civic space, and inequitable economic and governance systems in Myanmar and globally.

13. **Justification for a No-Cost Extension and the associated risks of ending the project too soon**: It is strongly recommended that the project request a No-cost Extension (NCE) and that GAC revises its previous decision and approves an NCE request. This will be critical in honouring existing commitments to communities and partners and increasing the impact and sustainability likelihood to protect the investments and gains to date.

Project Overview

Women Leading Durable Solutions in Myanmar (WLDS) is a 5-year multi-partner initiative to be implemented from April 2022 through March 2027. With a budget of CAD $8M, WLDS is working to contribute to the increased empowerment of adult and young women regarding their rights, access and control of resources and decision-making power, in crisis-affected and disadvantaged areas of Rakhine State of Myanmar. Oxfam Canada (OCA) and Oxfam in Myanmar (OiM) are leading the project, working with three local partner organizations (LPOs): Yaung Chi Thit (YCT), RWIO (Rakhine Women's Initiative Organization) and ACRO (Action for Community Resilience Organization).

Figure 2: WLDS Theory of Change Graphic

Grounded in feminist, rights-based principles linking development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding interventions, WLDS is applying a triple nexus change approach designed to meet women's immediate and long-term needs, mitigate their vulnerabilities, and address the underlying drivers of conflict. To drive forward gender equality (GE) and empower adult and young women, in all their diversity, WLDS is engaging with communities to encourage positive social norms, improve equitable access to basic services and resources, and increase women's participation and leadership in civic space. The consortium is integrating efforts to combat racism, exclusion, and discrimination across identity markers (e.g., gender, religious, ethnic, disability, income). WLDS' three integrated Theory of Change pillars seek to contribute changes in target areas of Rakhine State, as shown in figure 1.
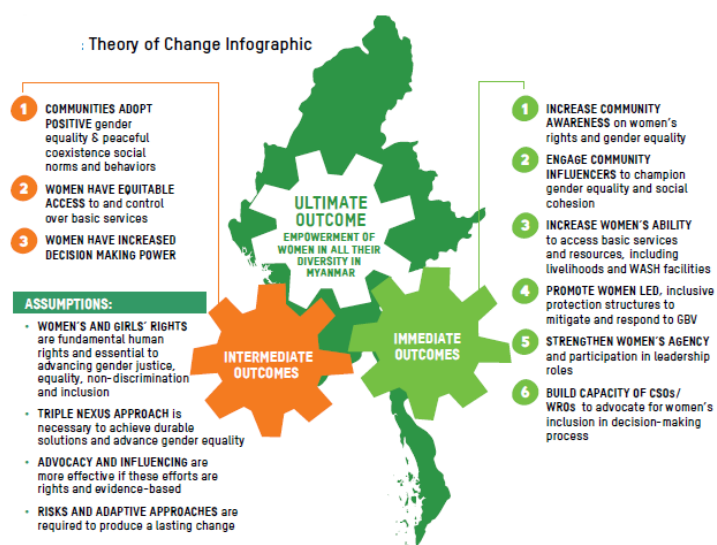
Methodology

The overall purpose of the MTR evaluation exercise and this report was to take both:

- a **summative perspective** on the WLDS project's outcomes, to support learning from experience and enhanced accountability and,
- a **formative perspective** to support strategic decision-making for the remainder of WLDS to maximize impact and sustainability for diverse groups of women, target communities, direct WLDS implementing organizations and the other local organizations supported by the project.

Objectives

1. To evaluate the preliminary achievements of the program, and the associated factors or conditions that enabled or hindered progress.
2. To test the Theory of Change and assumptions based on preliminary results.
3. To assess project implementation strengths and challenges and recommended program adjustments to better achieve intended project results.
4. To recommend program adjustments in design and implementation, including to the Work Plan (WP) and Project Management Framework (PMF) outcomes and indicators.

The evaluation gathered insights into early signs of change in community attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours toward women's rights, leadership, access to resources, and decision-making power among project beneficiaries. The fragile context in Rakhine and the deeply rooted social norms that constrain women's participation and agency at both household and community levels is a significant implementation and progress barrier, out of the project's control. Therefore, expected outcomes, impact and MTR findings and recommendations are grounded in a realistic understanding of what is achievable in the project context. Given the MTR objectives, timeframe/budget, and firm commitment to "do no harm", the MTR took a light-touch approach, using existing project monitoring data and conducted qualitative primary data to gather evidence of changes on a small sample, without a survey. Therefore, the changes reflected are anecdotal and nuanced but represent meaningful changes for the lives of women and reflective of foundational shifts in social and gender norms and actions in their communities.

Key Evaluation Questions and Themes

KEQ 1 - related to ToC Pillar 1/PMF 1100 Outcomes: "To what extent has the project contributed to the adoption of positive social norms and behaviors towards gender equality among communities in Rakhine State, particularly among women and marginalized groups?"

KEQ 2- related to ToC Pillar 2/PMF 1200 Outcomes: "How has the project improved women's access to and control over gender-responsive basic services and resources, particularly in crisis-affected and disadvantaged areas of Rakhine State?"

KEQ 2 – related to ToC Pillar 3/PMF 1300 Outcomes: "What are the early signals of project contribution to impact on women's leadership and decision-making power in governance, peacebuilding, and development processes in Rakhine State?"

Themes (evaluation criteria): Relevance, Effectiveness (of program approaches, ways of working, organizational strengthening), Efficiency, Impact (by ToC Pillar), and Sustainability.

MTR Process Overview

The MTR took place between March and July 2025. Oxfam commissioned a national evaluation consultant, who provided a draft inception report. They left the assignment early, after which Oxfam hired a Canadian evaluator who already worked with WLDS during the PIP and baseline phases. She completed the design process for data collection with the OiM/OCA focal points, applying a participatory approach for data collection with the MEAL staff from each LPO. She conducted the data analysis and validated the findings and recommendations with the WLDS team, before providing this final report.

Data Collection Methods

Primary data: The primary data collected by the independent evaluator and delegated Oxfam and partner staff is qualitative through purposive semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). LPO MEAL staff conducted the sessions with those outside their target areas to increase independence. Questionnaire tools were developed jointly with the consortium and the evaluator, then translated into local languages. The FGD/KII transcripts with community members were summarized and translated into English. The evaluator reviewed the files to clean and clarify points of ambiguity and gaps.

- **Six (6) FGDs with** 36 female and male project participants (beneficiaries) engaged in GLP, Male Champion (MC) and WASH interventions from 15 target communities (village and camp settings) of 5 townships. These were conducted in person, with some staff joining remotely.
- **Two (2) KIIs (in-person)** with 1 village leader and 1 spouse of a GLP Alumni.
- **Five (5) virtual (Zoom) KIIs by the independent evaluator in English with real-time translation support:** WLDS Project and Organizational Management staff from each partner YCT (2 staff), ACRO (2 staff) and RWIO (2 staff). OiM (2 staff) and OCA (1 staff). In two cases, the evaluator asked for additional responses to questions in writing via email (from 2 project staff), due to poor internet connections to allow for sufficient communication and responses to all questions.

See Annex B for the complete list of KII and FGD participants (without identifying personal details) by intervention group, age, location and partner as well as examples of the questionnaires.

Secondary data: Review of existing and compiled (analyzed) descriptive primary quantitative and other qualitative data. This was collected by the project, but not by the evaluator or during the evaluation timeframe so it is considered as a secondary data sources**. See Annex A for the list of external sources and Annex B for project reviewed sources; monitoring data** varies in quality, relevance and some were translated from Burmese to English.

Data Analysis Methods

Descriptive statistics and Quantitative Figures: Descriptive statistical records provided by the project (existing monitoring data) were drawn upon as relevant (e.g., existing PDMs, needs assessments, training evaluations and pre-post tests). As the evaluator did not collect or analyze the raw data nor verify these aggregated statistics and as such cannot be validated with firm accuracy by the evaluator.

With the primary data collected, the qualitative data was converted into quantitative form to summarize or highlight particular findings, themes, and outcomes. These must be interpreted with caution and are not representative of the project across all locations and populations.

Content Matrix Analysis: Content analysis was applied to qualitative data obtained from FGDs and KIIs and selected project documents in a matrix format. This method involves reviewing each FGD, KII and project document separately, and then as a group to identify patterns, themes, and trends in the data for a deeper understanding of the experiences and perceptions; and to organize the primary qualitative data around the ToC pillars (KEQs), themes, lessons and recommendations.

Standards of Evidence: The evaluator applied standards of **Plausibility, Triangulation, Transparency and Independence** to assess and communicate the strength of evidence (of both primary and secondary data

sources) – i.e., validity, reliability and credibility. This supported the identification of patterns, gaps and ambiguities in the dataset to reach overall findings for each KEQ and informed lessons and recommendations (see Annex B for the detailed explanation of the standards of evidence)

Rubrics: The key themes (evaluation criteria) of relevance, effectiveness (divided by program approaches, ways of working and organizational strengthening), efficiency, impact and sustainability were assessed on rubric scales to determine a comparable, easily communicated and visualized level of progress for each one. A qualitative narrative is provided with each one to explain the given rating and rationale (see Annex B for the rubrics for each theme).

Indicators: Due to the available time/budget, the decision to forgo a survey, and the contextual barriers, the MTR scope of work did not include an assessment of each PMF indicator and updated values. These will be assessed at the endline evaluation stage. Any data points and figures in this report related to indicators are not reflective of the actual indicator values.

Ethical Considerations

The evaluator adhered to Oxfam's feminist principles/Feminist-MEAL and ethical standards. This includes obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and avoiding any harm to the participants. As not all the data will be collected by the evaluator there are limitations on ethical oversight. Oxfam, partners and the evaluator held a data collection preparation session during which they reviewed and confirmed protocols for "do no harm" and informed consent.

The evaluator conducted the analysis and reporting with respect for the cultural and social norms of the WLDS communities and Oxfam and partner staff, guided by a feminist, decolonization lens. She collaborated closely with Oxfam focal points throughout the process to clarify information and contextual nuances, and work through questions and challenges.

All documents are stored and shared via Oxfam's Box folder for the mid-evaluation – Oxfam is responsible and accountable for this system and for ensuring data protection standards are upheld. The only exception is the raw data collected directly by the evaluator (the KIIs with Oxfam and partner staff) and the detailed analysis of this data. This is not stored on Box to allow for a higher degree of independence and confidentiality of accounts shared by staff which should not be accessed by Oxfam or other partners. The evaluator stored the KII notes, transcripts and recordings and the analysis of these on a safe paid internet platform (Dropbox account) with restricted access (to the evaluator only) until the conclusion and approval of the evaluation, after which it will be permanently deleted.

Challenges and Limitations

The MTR was intentionally designed as light touch and grounded in the realities of the context, to ensure do no harm and feasibility. The time and resources required for data collection in such a challenging context requires trade-offs and compromises. The WLDS team carefully weighed the options and risks to develop a pragmatic and safe MTR approach that would support learning and improvement. The available timeframe was relatively short and constrained by poor internet and logistics to reach beneficiaries. This limited the evaluation scope in terms of sampling and representation.

The unanticipated change of independent evaluators part-way created some delay and duplication in the process. The second evaluator had prior experience with OCA, OiM and the project and was able to work effectively with the team. However, the language barriers between English and Burmese and remote support brought some additional time and translation implications.

Due to all these factors, the qualitative sample was relatively small and purposively selected to reach the most accessible and engaged participants. The insights provided are very rich and useful, but the representativeness is limited. WASH FGDs were mixed with both males and female (intended to be separate. There are overlaps in some FGDs by intervention groups (e.g., WASH group members who are also GLP or MC alumni). This created difficulty in disaggregation of certain variables and trends by gender and intervention group for certain outcomes, also given the overall sample was quite small. Fewer community KIIs were possible to conduct than planned (2 in total), narrowing the input of people who are not directly engaged in WLDS activities and community leaders – such perspectives would be helpful in future to strengthen validity of findings. There is an increased risk of bias given that the community-level qualitative data was collected by project staff as well as the self-reported nature of KIIs and FGDs. Each partner did not interview participants that their organization targeted to help mitigate for this bias.

The quality of FGD/KII questionnaires and final primary dataset notably improved from the baseline. The translation from English to Burmese, to local languages and back to English means there are inherent human error and translation issues, impacting interpretation and accuracy. The quality and quantity of the secondary monitoring data reviewed is mixed, while not all of it was highly relevant for MTR purposes.

Overall, it is important to interpret reported changes and trends within the framework of a limited qualitative sample with uneven geographic and ethnic representation, and varied progress across intervention areas and groups. The examples provided are anecdotal in nature, with differences in the types and levels of changes reported across settings. These variations limit the generalizability of findings to all WLDS implementation contexts and beneficiaries and do not allow for measurement of PMF indicator values. However, the MTR was designed based on a purposive qualitative sample of participants that could share promising signs of the early signs of change due to project contribution while also asking for reflection on process, quality and recommendations for improvements. This includes staff across organizations and roles who are deeply familiar with the context and project. Partners and the evaluator understand that the sample is not fully representative, and a lack of generalizability is inherent in the design, but this limitation was not unforeseen. Such testimonies are meaningful and worthwhile, supporting several consistent key findings. The triangulated dataset and findings are valuable for the main MTR objectives of informing project plans and recommendations to improve and adapt going forward.

Context Analysis Update[1]

While already a highly challenging and fragile context, since the baseline study the conditions for WLDS implementation were severely impacted by the "polycrisis situation" (multiple, interacting crises in one condensed timeframe and region) and worsening operating conditions. These dynamics contributed to a deepening humanitarian crisis and needs, also resulting in project delays, and calling for enhanced security

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[1] Source: Year 3 WLDS Annual Report, June 2025.

and safety requirements, and continuous project adaptations. By March 2025, displacement in Rakhine exceeded 560,000 individuals, and over 2 million people were at risk of starvation due to collapsing food systems, with domestic production to meet just 20% of needs by early 2025, as projected by the UNDP. The region's banking infrastructure also collapsed, marked by exorbitant transfer fees (up to 20%) and the closure of all private banks in parts of northern Rakhine. Logistical operations were severely hindered by fuel shortages, transportation blockades, extortion at checkpoints, and delayed travel authorizations. These combined factors, as summarized below, were strongly considered in the MTR analysis, findings and recommendations.

Climate shocks and environmental factors:[2] Cyclone Mocha's destruction in 2023 worsened living conditions, further isolating women and girls in already marginalized communities. Limited international humanitarian aid and a lack of accountability for abuses contribute to the worsening situation for these populations in the region. The monsoon season in 2024 brought additional hardship, causing floods that have resulted in fatalities, damaged homes and farmland, and further contaminating drinking water sources. These conditions have deepened the healthcare crisis, with outbreaks of waterborne diseases, such as cholera and dysentery, becoming more prevalent in conflict-affected regions. Skin allergies and other hygiene-related issues are also on the rise, particularly in displaced populations who are residing in some of the WLDS project areas. The combined impact of these environmental factors and the ongoing conflict has further strained resources and increased vulnerability. WLDS adapted WASH sessions to include more WASH awareness raising to communities and also prioritized workplans for WASH need-based assessment and dignity kit (DK) distribution, especially in Sittwe area where there were cases of Acute Water Diarrhea.

Armed Conflict, Recruitment and Territorial Control: The Arakan Army (AA) expanded its control over Rakhine State, now governing 14 out of 17 townships. Sittwe remains under military control but has experienced increased hostilities, including artillery shelling, tight security, check points and closures to several access points – only air travel from Yangon is possible. The United League of Arakan's (ULA) establishment of governance structures in AA-controlled areas introduced new administrative dynamics. The transportation blockade between AA and SAC controlled area have affected humanitarian access and coordination, heightened risks for field staff, and disrupted community activities The military has also intensified recruitment efforts, particularly targeting Rohingya communities in Sittwe. Unconfirmed reports suggest the AA is also recruiting men and women, sometimes through a lottery system, causing fear among youths and leading to increased migration and dropout rates from project activities.

Continued Displacement and Worsening Humanitarian Needs: The ongoing conflict has displaced over 560,000 individuals in Rakhine State as of June 2025. The UNDP reports that domestic food production will cover only 20% of the population's needs by March-April 2025, putting over 2 million people at risk of starvation. Livelihood assessments highlight disruptions in markets and agriculture, emphasizing the need for support in local food production and market strengthening.

Banking and Financial Flows*: The collapse of Rakhine's banking system, marked by the closure of private banks and the Myanmar Economic Bank ceasing operations in Sittwe, severely impacted financial

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[2] Source Year 3 semi-annual report November 2024.

transactions. Transfer and withdrawal fees spiked to between 15% and 20%, impeding fund transfers and project operations. Oxfam and partners sought alternative methods to ensure timely fund management, but challenges persist.

Transportation, Communications and Logistics Barriers; Travel authorizations from the Rakhine state authority remain a significant hurdle, particularly in Sittwe, where dignity kit distributions faced months-long delays due to security concerns and bureaucratic processes. Without a TA, organizations are not permitted to transport aid materials in Sittwe. Checkpoints, such as those near Manzi Junction, have reported instances of extortion and goods confiscation. In other townships, transportation blockades, high fuel costs, and inflated prices for materials further constrained logistics and delayed project activities.

Communication infrastructure has deteriorated significantly since November 2024. Telecommunication blackouts are in all AA-controlled areas, and the alternative internet access is also restricted due to security concerns, creating severe limitations for CSOs and NGOs communications. Sittwe has experienced complete telecommunication blackouts, relying solely on limited-bandwidth internet services installed at the Sittwe office. These constraints complicated coordination and necessitate prior approvals and scheduling for meetings, often requiring 2-3 weeks of lead time.

The context is highly relevant to the decisions regarding the MTR design and process, also reflecting the myriads of operational challenges that affected project implementation and outcomes to date. The escalating humanitarian crises and risks in project locations are of primary concern for WLDS partners and communities. These fluid dynamics informed a series of project team decisions on how to address humanitarian needs as a top priority, while still integrating gender equality and women's leadership content to influence positive social norm change, based on ethno-cultural and safety considerations.

Key Findings by Theory of Change Pillar and PMF Outcomes

Increased empowerment of adult and young women, in all their diversity, with regard to rights, access and control of resources and decision-making power

Evidence of progress and changes contributing towards this ultimate outcome (1000) are discussed below by TOC pillar and PMF outcomes. FGD women participants and WLDS staff KIs shared **several examples of women using their decision-making power in their households and communities to advance GE and women's rights (WR). Several men interviewed expressed favourable support for changing harmful gendered practices and role modeling positive social norms**. **Both women and men in FGDs reflected on ways that GE and WR are improving in their communities, as well as the general recognition that changes are gradual and challenges persist.** As discussed above, values for indicators are not possible to measure at this stage. Any figures related to PMF indicators are provided for illustration of potential effects but should not be interpreted as representative nor to compare with baseline values.

Advancing gender justice and human rights go together with improved sociopolitical and economic conditions in which people's fundamental needs are met and they can move beyond survival to thrive and

embed positive changes. The dataset finds that nascent changes for WLDS communities are apparent but also gradual and uneven, with partners adeptly working in a relentless uphill battle given the context. Immense but necessary resources, time and perseverance are required to contribute to the aims represented in the ToC. Such trends have been evidenced in other Oxfam GE projects and evaluations across different settings.[3] External credible research literature also finds that challenging harmful norms and achieving progress towards GE and WR in most contexts is often a complex, non-linear process, with both gradual and abrupt changes influenced by wider geopolitical and economic conditions, systems and shocks. It reinforces that such efforts call for simultaneous targeted interventions across political, social and economic spheres.[4] Both the external evidence base and the project experience to date validates that integrated multi-sector models such as the WLDS' triple nexus approach are both relevant and required; and emphasizes that this work must also be grounded in realistic expectations with unyielding commitment and resource investment over significant timeframes.

Regarding timeframes, it is relevant to clarify the distinction between timing of the project on 'paper' and in practice. Although WLDS officially started with GAC funding in March 2022, it is also important to ground interpretation of progress and evaluative findings within the more limited timeframe since about the start of Y3 during which it has been possible for gaining meaningful momentum of project implementation. The extended PIP and baseline phase in Y1 and the emergence of significant new crises required agile adaptation and response to evolving community needs and access constraints – e.g., Cyclone Mocha, monsoon flooding, and the escalation of conflict in Rakhine State target areas in 2023 which continued and intensified since then. These crises and the high-risk operating environment of fluid and unpredictable mobility and security conditions and poor infrastructural barriers (e.g., internet, power, logistics, procurement) resulted in continuous implementation pauses and delays. The evaluation evidence reflects that the consortium demonstrated creative problem solving and new implementation strategies to overcome these as much as possible and has made headway. especially in Y3. A senior WLDS staff member articulated this in a KII as follows. *"While full implementation only began in Year 3, with Year 1 focused on inception and Year 2 disrupted by the cyclone and escalated conflict, there are visible early outcomes. These include increased confidence among women leaders and awareness of gender equality among Male Champion participants, especially notable given the low baseline influenced by cultural and religious norms."*

Despite the many challenges faced by communities and WLDS partners, there are emergent positive shifts with progress achieved towards immediate and intermediate outcomes across the three ToC Pillars to different degrees. The most observable changes are found in Pillar 1 (1100), followed by Pillar 2 (1200), with much more limited scope of activities and change in Pillar 3 (1300). However, these changes are interlinked with overlap; thus, progress should be interpreted as reinforcing and combined, rather than in silos structured by PMF outcomes. The scope and depth of positive changes discussed herein were shared by a small sample of purposively selected receptive beneficiaries. Progress and changes are quite

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[3] For example, as found in the MTR for the GAC funded project that OCA led from 2017-2022, "Amplify Change: Supporting Women's Rights in Afghanistan," (Annual Report, June 2020)

[4] See: Harper, C., Marcus, R., George, R., D'Angelo, S. and Samman, E. (2020). '<u>Gender, power and progress: How norms change</u>' London: ALIGN/ ODI; Cookson, T.P., L. Fuentes, M.K. Kuss, and J. Bitterly. (2023). '<u>Social Norms, Gender and Development: A Review of Research and Practice</u>'. UN-Women Discussion Paper Series No. 42. New York: UN-Women; Marcus, R. and Harper, C. (2014). "<u>Gender Justice and Social Norms Processes of change for Adolescent Girls,</u>" ODI Report, London.

varied across target locations (camps, villages, and remoteness) and the diverse ethno-cultural community groups engaged in WLDS. Some distinctions are also suggested within the age and gender groups of participants. The correlated variables of enabling and opposing conditions for deep positive changes in GE, WR and advancement of women's leadership and decision-making should be explored with more depth in future project monitoring and through the endline evaluation.

The evidence collected in the MTR process and project experience and learning to date demonstrates that the level of ambition for outcomes as per the original design are likely unfeasible, especially given the context is still likely to remain high-risk and challenging. Also relevant to the future progress and reach of the project, several camps have been forced to close since WLDS began, including 8 WLDS' target camps. When combined with forced conscription and crisis-induced migration, attrition levels are higher than would normally be expected. Figures provided by OiM in July 2025 show that 10% of the original project participants are no longer engaged, recorded as 'inactive', 'drop-out' or 'other' (e.g., due to death or a removed target area). This is out of the project's control but affects the overall targets and continuity of engagement in these communities, and some of the project-supported structures. The attrition levels and closed target camps should be considered when comparing baseline and endline figures at project closure.

Interviews with LPOs varied in views regarding priorities for revisions, with a few staff KIs expressing resistance to reducing or removing any activities. These discussions reflect a strong commitment of partners to serve women and their communities, and their resilience to endure extremely difficult and stressful operating conditions. Partners are working on forecasting for Y4 and Y5 grounded in a realistic assessment of implementation conditions. A revised WP and PMF is underway to prioritize quality and targeted benefits while reducing quantity and reach compared to the initial targets to ensure feasibility and safety.

ToC Pillar 1/1100 Outcomes Findings in response to KEQ 1*: "To what extent has the project contributed to the adoption of positive social norms and behaviors towards gender equality and rights of marginalized groups among participating communities in Rakhine State?*

Increased adoption of positive social norms and behaviors by communities in support of GE, adult and young women's rights and peaceful co-existence

The strongest project contribution here is found amongst those directly engaged in GLP and MC interventions. WASH group participants also indicated relevant changes, although the focus of examples were more related to norms and behaviours of HH and community hygiene and sanitation. **Overall, more than two-thirds of all FGD participants reported observed gradual, meaningful shifts in social norms and behaviours among others in their households and communities**. These references reflect perceived behaviour change among peers, neighbours, spouses, youth, or village members influenced by the broader project messaging and participant role-modelling. **The most prevalent examples were about gender role flexibility (i.e., more men sharing household duties), increased participation of women (i.e., speaking up more in community settings); and greater acceptance of GE in public and private spheres (i.e., boys and young men showing more respectful behaviour, increased openness or direct invitations to include women in community affairs and groups)**. A few women shared a belief that they had changed leaders' perceptions who previously ignored women's voices. The following quotes from GLP and MC participants illustrate composite examples of these reported changes at a personal, household and community levels.

"I had less confidence couldn't speak out and increase self-confidence myself after joined training. In community, village most of decision makers were men and [women] had to follow. Now, the women involve in meetings and decision-making process. It is the benefits of project implementation." (Rohingya Female aged 25, GLP Alumni, Aung Seik Village)

"Through male champion dialogue sessions at the camp, men have also changed and are no longer the same. They also listened to women's voices with respect…In the past, women were considered slaves. Now, women are also given equal rights, such as education and help with household chores, and domestic violence is decreasing. Mutual understanding has improved, and women have learned that it is important to educate themselves so that they can work outside the home." (Rohingya Female aged 60, GLP Multiplier, aged 60, KDK Camp)

"Personally, my determination and confidence have increased. Another factor is my family. I have a better understanding with my wife. Moreover, the whole village is now more actively participating in development efforts and working together for progress." (Adult Rakhine male, MC Alumni and WASH group member, Pa Paing Chaung Village)

The reported changes experienced by FGD participants themselves (their own awareness, knowledge, and behaviours) hold more evaluative weight than perceptions about changes in others who were not interviewed; the monitoring data did not enable robust verification in this regard. Therefore, specific significant change claims about community- wide changes linked to Intermediate Outcome 1100 cannot be substantiated or expressed in representative quantitative terms at this stage. However, the specificity and meaningful insights offered across the FGDs highlight a reasonably measured view about the pace and effort involved in changing such norms at the community level. **Several accounts indicated that for other members in their communities, GE and WRs are still something that are still to be permitted by men rather than an inherent right, with specific instances of male gatekeeping also shared**. For example, all participants in the FGD with MC Multipliers expressed strong support for GE and WRs while also sharing a consensus that: "There is still a strong need to change men's perspectives towards women in the villages. Only when more men become aware will it be possible to truly promote the role of women."

Participants demonstrated strong motivation and support for expanding their own knowledge and skills in GE/WR, while many emphasized the need for increased male engagement and expansion of training efforts to reach more community members. The overall combined testimonies from FGDs and KIIs with participants and project staff can be interpreted as **signals of emerging impact on adoption of positive social norms,** starting from the most directly involved and expanding outwards gradually. The perceptions for why and how people change are varied, reflecting the diversity in communities and participants.

"In the village, we can say that changes have occurred through the sharing we've done. Some people, however, have not changed. Those who have changed are more educated and understand the principles better. These people have made positive changes after attending the training. Some have started to reflect and change behaviors like their drinking habits. They have learned to treat their spouses well and maintain a peaceful family. Those who haven't changed tend to lack education and, due to their poor circumstances, are slow to adapt. Even those who haven't changed are starting to reconsider in certain areas. For example, what used to be daily arguments have now become less frequent." (Rakhine Adult Male, MC Alumni).

"Personally, I've seen a lot of changes. Some have changed completely, some are starting to change slowly, and others haven't changed yet…The younger generation is starting to reflect on their actions towards women and changing their behavior. Those who haven't changed are still struggling with financial problems, drinking habits, and dissatisfaction with their work. Even if they try to change, they face resistance from their environment. If they feel criticism from their surroundings, they may become discouraged." (Rakhine Youth Male, MC Multiplier).

Increased community awareness of Gender Equality and Women's Rights

Similar patterns of gradual changes here (1110) are also associated with proximity to the project. FGD participants from GLP, MC and WASH intervention groups (some of whom participated in more than one intervention group) showed strong consensus that they gained valuable awareness (and knowledge) about GE and WRs through the project and are actively working to spread awareness in their communities. They expressed transformational personal growth and learning facilitated through project trainings and sessions. **A clear point of consensus in the FGD with GLP Alumni was the transformative impact of the training on their self-perception and confidence—especially the realization that women possess inner strength and leadership potential.**

The majority of participants across FGDs individually shared specific points that demonstrated deep understanding, also explaining how their perspectives have shifted because of project engagement and trainings. The most common key takeaways were around sex and gender, harmful gendered social norms and power dynamics, GBV in its many forms, women's domestic care burden, and the right and benefits related to women's participation and decision making.

"Before joining this course, I lived with the mindset that men and women were defined by God from birth, so women should accept what their environment has determined for them… However, when I learned about sex and gender, I realized that there are very few differences in nature. [I have] come to understand a lot about how men and women are often discriminated against and defined by their environment, and now [my] views have completely changed." (Rohingya youth female, GLP Alumni).

"I learned that we should treat women with mutual respect. In the past, we used to follow girls around or tease them, not knowing that it could be considered emotional harassment…I used to think violence was only what we saw in movies. But after attending the training, I learned that even teasing or bothering someone is also a form of violence. It made me reflect, and now I'm more careful about my actions." (Youth Rakhine Male, MC Alumni).

"Through the training on gender equality, I have learned a lot about equal rights for men and women. In the village, because of these trainings, people have become more aware of gender equality. There has been a shift in attitudes towards women, and in families, men have started to help with household chores." (Youth Rakhine Male, MC Alumni).

KIIs with project partners emphasized the strength of the WLDS approach in raising awareness and facilitating knowledge transfer, and the project's accomplishments in successfully tailoring training materials for different ethno-cultural groups (e.g., adapting content in Rohingya Muslim communities to align with religious values, adjusting curriculum to varied linguistic and literacy capacities). One senior WLDS staff member explained that the WLDS team, "*has adapted the training approach accordingly, particularly for rural and illiterate participants.*" This was echoed in other KIIs. The value of the project's

male engagement strategy was also highlighted. For example, another long-term WLDS staff member who has been working on the project since the proposal stage described the success of this approach, *"[The] main focus of male engagement is to get them to be advocates and champions of equality. Introducing the male champion scheme – encouraging them to do that domestic labour issues, challenge gender norms and their households and communities and getting them together to build solidarity and share and have 'a ha' moments. [This] increases their confidence and self-esteem."*

Aligned with several qualitative accounts related to awareness and knowledge gains, the available monitoring data on GLP and MC Alumni TOT trainings, MC Awareness Sessions pre and post-test scores and trainee feedback also show positive shifts in terms of understanding, knowledge and satisfaction.[5]

Pre- and post-test results from a GLP Alumni sample (Modules 1 and 2 trainings) indicate strong gains in gender equality understanding[6]. In Module 1 on sex and gender (n=35), comprehension rose from 58% to 94%, with consistent improvements across all questions and 89% reporting significant knowledge gains. Module 2 on women's leadership (n=34) showed stable overall scores at 78%, with modest improvements on some questions and slight declines on others, and fewer participants reporting significant new knowledge. This could suggest difficulty for some participants in internalizing certain leadership-related concepts and the need for more frequent or deeper training content over time.

MC awareness session participants (n30) improved their pre-and-post test scores, with an average 16.3 percentage point increase in scores between tests. MC ToT participants (n21) showed an even greater gain, with scores rising from 37.7% to 63.7%, marking an average 26.0 percentage point increase. Despite starting from a lower baseline, ToT participants demonstrated more substantial relative improvement, perhaps reflective of the more intensive training and exposure received by ToT participants.[7]

Overall, the trainee evaluation forms further support these findings with high interest and satisfaction rates across all GLP and MC groups. MC ToT and awareness session participants gave highly positive feedback on the training content, facilitation, and logistics. GLP Participants favourably rated the quality of facilitation, content, logistics (including meals and transport), and especially appreciated the inclusion of childcare support to enable participation. They reported gaining knowledge on leadership, gender roles, power dynamics, and self-confidence. Some literacy barriers were noted, and several participants expressed interest in future sessions.

Improved skills and motivation of influencers to champion gender equality, women' rights and inclusion of marginalized communities

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[5] The dataset used for this finding is from one LPO and does not represent all GLP and MC trainings across the project and partners; the independent evaluator did not analyze the raw data.

[6] Module 1 is on sex and gender, gender roles, types of power, and social norms. Module 2 is focused on women's leadership (barriers, approaches, and skill-building).

[7] TOTs are provided to GLP and MC Alumni and include the full curriculum with different modules across a longer timeframe. TOT participants then led awareness sessions in their communities to share key learning in shorter timeframes with more limited content.

Evidence for outcomes of improved skills (1120) are interlinked with the changes and patterns described above. Confidence emerged as a prevalent theme in the qualitative dataset. As with knowledge, confidence is also a necessary building block for improving skills and fostering motivation. **Over 90% of FGD participants expressed increased self-confidence—either directly stated or clearly implied – and ways they applied these gains in practice.** GLP Alumni (all female) and WASH FGD members (both male and female) showed the strongest concentration of confidence gains, but all groups expressed meaningful shifts. **Confidence was most often expressed through examples of actions taken such as speaking in public or mixed-gender spaces; sharing knowledge with peers and community members; and/or taking initiative, leading activities, or advising others related to GE, WR and WASH**. **Women primarily described transitions from shyness to participation and/or leadership, while men often described their growth as becoming more equitable, reflective, and vocal about gender justice.**

"Women used to know that power was only in the hands of men, but…when you realize that you have powers that you previously thought you didn't have, you become more confident in yourself than before." (Rohingya female aged 38, GLP Alumni, camp in Sittwe).

"Being part of this group has helped increase my confidence. I now speak more in public and can think critically. The lessons I learned from the training have also improved communication in my family, making it more positive and harmonious. This has helped create a more peaceful and happy family. In the community, male champions are emerging, and more opportunities for women are being created." (Youth Rakhine male, MC Alumni, Kyar Paik Kay Village).

Motivation gained through the project to change on a personal level as well as to promote community awareness and social norm change were reported by the majority of FGD participants. Almost 60% offered reflections about personal behaviour changes that were motivated by increased confidence or knowledge gains. Of these, **GLP participants represented the highest proportion of personal changes, often describing transitions from passivity to proactivity in leadership or public speaking**. **Several MC participants in FGDs described marked shifts in their attitudes and behaviors, citing examples of increased household engagement, advising peers, and promoting GE. More respect for women, recognition of their labour, and rejection of harmful norms like emotional harassment and rigid roles were repeatedly noted**. WASH group FGD participants expressed lower—but still meaningful—examples of change in this area, primarily in hygiene leadership and expression (voice) within their communities.

"Sharing the knowledge gained from the training discussion gives [us] motivation and courage to attend further training… We also want to share the knowledge we gain with others." (Adult Rohingya female, GLP Multiplier, KDK Camp).

"Before the training, I only knew a little, but now, as a Male Champion, I believe I should do more." (Adult Rakhine male, MC Alumni, Yoe Sa Nwin Village).

"Your mindset is crucial. Also, the women from GLP encouraged me by sharing the benefits of the training, which motivated me to join and eventually become a Male Champion." (Youth Rakhine male, MC Alumni, Sa Inn Yawr Haung Village).

"When I first got married, I thought I was the only one working hard while my wife just stayed at home and relaxed. I thought I had more value than her. But after attending the gender training, my perspective changed. Now I understand and appreciate my wife more. I started thinking about who works more. When

I really thought about it, I realized she works harder — while I'm resting, she's cooking or washing. I now try to understand and support her more. I've also come to see that other women around me also have their own value. This training helped me understand that women can work just as equally as men...In our village, there are many women's groups. I saw their work, but I didn't value it. Now I see their efforts and abilities more clearly…how valuable their work is for the community." (Adult Rakhine male MC Multiplier, Yoe Sa Nwin Village).

Approximately 80% of FGD participants also shared specific actions they took to promote GE and WR. Actions were primarily facilitating or sharing awareness sessions; disseminating messages about respectful relationships, shared household responsibilities, and women's leadership; advising others to stop harmful behaviours; role-modelling GE behaviours; empowering other women to speak or lead; and advocating at the community level, for example by engaging with religious leaders, elders, or authorities.

"In the village, older people don't understand the purpose of the training as much as younger ones do. Some say things like, 'If women are given equal rights, what will be left for men?' When they say things like that, I explain the purpose of the training to them." (Adult Rakhine male, MC Multiplier, Nat Hla Village).

"Since the [MC] dialogue sessions were held… and knowledge from it was shared among the community, her husband is no longer the same as before and now helps out with household chores…[I] heard and saw other [GLP] participants sharing the knowledge gained from the training sessions with women in the community." (Adult Rohingya female, GLP multiplier and WASH group member, Tam Bi Village).

Several FGD participants also expressed a perception of influencing others in their households or communities. In the GLP Alumni FGD, three members described detailed examples about how the confidence, motivation and knowledge they gained through WLDS interventions helped them to take action in challenging harmful behaviors and promoting more inclusive and equitable gender norms, including positive support for LGBTQ+ community members.

Wider adoption of positive social norms and behaviour changes at the broader community level remains uneven and unverifiable based on FGD accounts and other available data. **Persistent patriarchal attitudes, peer resistance, and generational gaps suggest that while change is underway, it remains localized and dependent on direct exposure. The vast majority of FGD participants requested more training for themselves and others, while emphasizing the importance of increasing male engagement and/or MC sessions.** They acknowledged persistent resistance amongst other men and emphasized the need for continued sensitization. **Their accounts validated these trainings as a valuable tool for shifting mindsets and fostering support for GE and WRs**. The responses were generally cohesive and consistent. This reveals an overall belief of the effectiveness of the project approach, the momentum built to date, as well as need for more sustained widespread engagement as a necessary condition for gender norm transformation.

ToC Pillar 2/1200 Outcomes Findings in response to KEQ 2: *"How has the project supported improvement for women's access to and control over gender-responsive basic services and resources, particularly in crisis-affected and disadvantaged areas of Rakhine State?"*

<u>**Improved equitable access to and control over gender-responsive basic services and resources by adult and young women**</u>

The project's support and related positive changes here are predominantly found through its WASH interventions. While most FGD participants did not directly discuss changes using language of "women's access and control of gender-responsive basic services and resources," several shared perceptions and examples about men supporting women's participation more at home and in community activities. FGD male participants provided examples such as supporting women's leadership in roadbuilding or encouraging their wives or other women to attend community meetings. This indicates limited and indirect signs of change for emerging access and control of other basic services, with women playing more active roles in public and community affairs (unrelated to the project) and gaining more support to do so.

WLDS partners completed participatory assessments with women during Y3/start of Y4 in WASH, Livelihoods, Rapid Care and Protection. Several planned interventions are expected to contribute to 1200 outcomes in target communities, as informed by these assessments. These processes in themselves represent a fundamental step in the causal pathway for women to play a leading role in their communities. It also logically reinforces progress and benefits under 1100 and 1300. Gains in women's visibility, respect and confidence are fostered by engaging in such processes, including their participation in WASH groups, and leadership roles within them. This has helped to shift discriminatory beliefs and practices about women's roles, rights, and capacities to participate, lead and make decisions in private and public spheres.

Overall, significant changes and evidence under ToC Pillar 2/PMF 1200 remain pending based on future activities and success. Therefore, impact (as designed) and indicator values cannot be assessed at this stage. Both the participatory assessments and MTR evidence demonstrate high needs for and relevance of supporting gender-responsive basic services and resources in the Rakhine context. Livelihoods were strongly emphasized in the FGDs and KIIs as an area of high concern as contextual conditions have worsened. While the majority expressed support and gains in GE and WR (as per 1100), several also warned that the lack of livelihoods skills and opportunities are a potential barrier to sustaining interest and engagement in GE and WR. Increasing protection and WASH support is also critical for women's (and community) survival and wellbeing, as also raised by several staff and community members. However, the severity of economic conditions may have skewed the focus more towards livelihoods gaps and needs. It remains an essential priority for WLDS and other appropriate actors to urgently address and advocate.

WLDS partners plan to continue applying the integrated social norm change and champion model within the WASH, livelihoods, and protection interventions. The approach of integrating GE and WR into basic services activities proved effective in the case of WASH. **Establishing WASH groups and providing Women's Leadership in WASH trainings acted as strategic entry point for gaining leaders' and community buy-in for GE and WRs and fostering trust between partners and communities by meeting a critical need.** These interventions also simultaneously built awareness and knowledge, created opportunities for discussions, and catalyzed positive actions. A WLDS senior staff member explained that "*Regular WASH group meetings give space for communities to meet each other and share. [Our target] villages have no other organizations supporting them [camps are different, they have more actors]. We can see over time their willingness to engage in WASH and more actions they want to do – hygiene promotion, awareness raising in their communities, helped with the WASH needs assessment in the Oxfam*

areas too. [Another LPO] reported they also have strong WASH groups that are ready to take their own actions beyond meeting monthly, like cleaning campaigns, and changes in motivation for taking actions."

This perception was also reinforced in community FGDs. For example, *"In family and community, the social norms rooted on women is unnecessary to work outside and should work inside of house. I got knowledge from 'Women Leadership in WASH' sessions. I think these stereotypes changed that women could work outside and got opportunities [more] freely than before."* (Youth Female WASH Group member and GLP alumni, Min Phuu Village).

Increased women's skills and ability to access basic services and resources

Evidence for such outcomes (1210) are concentrated in the WASH services and resources provided by the project via the materials, awareness on HH and community hygiene and sanitation, and trainings. Women's inclusion and roles in WASH services and governance (WASH groups) facilitated by WLDS is also notable. WLDS partners' supportive and adaptive actions in response to Cyclone Mocha response were especially valued, while embedding WASH community groups and developing members' skills gained momentum during Y3 of the project. The MTR identified several examples of benefits and changes in FGDs, KIIs and the WASH needs-based assessments and post-distribution monitoring (PDM) project evidence. As with the other WLDS TOC pillars/PMF outcomes, positive changes are more anecdotal in nature rather than quantifiably representative. Activities and benefits are unevenly spread across project target locations and groups due to severe and continuously shifting access, logistics, procurement and security barriers, largely out of the project's control. The evidence also reflects an adaptive and creative project approach to problem solving and prioritizing WASH basic services and needs with urgency, while taking care to integrate feminist rights-based ways of working with women and their communities.

About 90% of WASH group FGD participants (both female and males) reported specific examples of knowledge, skills, abilities, and/or wider impactful benefits because of the WLDS WASH interventions and their involvement, while 100% of the female participants shared such examples explicitly or through consensus. The most prevalent ones related to increased knowledge and skills and how these translated to **more community awareness and safe WASH promotion; taking practical actions to help their communities such as mobilizing garbage bin use/trash disposal or organizing hygiene campaigns; and encouraging and including other women in these initiatives**. Several perceived they had a positive influence over household and community hygiene and sanitation practices and observed noticeable positive changes.

"At first, nothing was being done. The water was dirty, and water canals were blocked, which caused diseases. After joining the WASH group, I started practicing sanitation, and everything changed. I understood better how WASH can improve my life. For example, even my water usage at home has changed. I learned a lot that I didn't know before... I learned about empowerment and how women can do important work…There have been many changes, both in the family and village. As time passed with the WASH Group, things have changed even more. People in the village are now supporting the WASH Group. Both the older and younger people have started to recognize the WASH Group, and they are interacting more respectfully. In the village, when we discuss the needs, people are more accepting of our suggestions." (Adult Rakhine female, WASH Group Chairperson, Buu Ywet Ma Nyoe Village).

"In village health and sanitation activities, I have taken charge of organizing and leading tasks. One of the things I am most proud of is leading the digging of a new water tank for the village." (Adult Rakhine female, WASH group member, Nan Kya Village).

"Across all partners, WASH groups have become platforms for community collaboration. Especially in Oxfam-only areas (non-camp), community members have become increasingly proactive—initiating hygiene campaigns, participating in needs assessments, and sustaining monthly group activities with growing motivation." (Senior WLDS staff member).

Generally, the evidence base suggests good levels of satisfaction with the project-supported WASH interventions to date - both as helpful in meeting a critical basic need and doing so in a gender-responsive and inclusive manner. Due to the WLDS triple nexus approach's flexibility and responsiveness, and strengthened adaptive capacity demonstrated by WLDS partners, the project pivoted quickly post-cyclone Mocha to respond to WASH needs in as many locations as possible, engaging women WASH group members and GLP alumni to play an active role. A long-term WLDS team member highlighted that, *"[WLDS] used existing structures of WASH and protection committees to build dialogue and administer the distribution…women-led groups that were consulted and acted in the response to the Cyclone."*

Dignity Kits (DKs) are a form of equitable access and gender-responsive resources for women as they provide essential materials that are often overlooked. The OxSI PDM report included three camps involved in WLDS. Aggregated results of female respondents found that 100% reported DKs as useful for their families; 83% reported the benefit of DKs for improving personal hygiene and reducing family costs; and 100% reported satisfaction with quality of all items (pads, underwear, life soap, laundry soap). Due to high needs, monthly rounds of DKs were requested by several respondents. WLDS procured more items and plans to distribute additional DKs to selected locations.

"The project provided Dignity Kits and aqua-tab tablets for drinking water after Mocha cyclone hit. And my family [became] aware and got knowledge on gender equality, that women have equal rights same as men." (Rakhine female, aged 24, WASH group member and GLP Alumni, Min Phuu Village).

"My village was impacted and damaged, the [WLDS] organization supported the materials and assistances. The WASH group donated the water to the most affected and damaged villages... I helped support for accommodation places to relocated displaced people who were from most affected areas." Rakhine female, aged 20, WASH group member and GLP Alumni, Aung Seik Village).

"Dignity kits might not have been included if it was a development project only, but we could add it in this project as a humanitarian evolving need [because of nexus approach] …We used WASH and [existing community] protection committees to build dialogue and administer distribution [during Cyclone Mocha]." (WLDS senior staff member).

The participatory WASH assessments enhanced knowledge and skills of adult and young women to voice and determine their needs and preferences. Women played a leadership role in these processes for their communities. A relevant impact identified within the WASH FGD sample was the prevalence of

reported gains in confidence, pride, and respect due to their roles in WASH groups, assessments and distribution. These changes arguably contribute to fostering support for changing social norms and behaviors around GE and WRs and increasing women's decision making and leadership in both household and public domains. **This helps to challenge and shift discriminatory perceptions and validates women as credible and capable with skills and abilities that can benefit communities.**

"[Before joining] in WASH sessions and GLP training, women did not know to involve and participate in community activities. Now, women feel their strengths to involve and has ownership sense to attend community meetings and join regularly." (Rakhine female, aged 20, Aung Seik Village, WASH Group member and GLP Alumni).

"Now, as more women join the WASH group, the men are also saying that women should participate too, whether they are educated or not." (Adult Rohingya male, WASH group member and MC Alumni, Let Taw Rei Village).

The project monitoring data reviewed for the MTR from "Women's Leadership in WASH" trainings reflect general trends of increased knowledge and satisfaction of participants. Based on the pre-and-post test scores, participants (n89) average test scores increased from 12.2 to 16.3 correct responses out of 20 questions, representing a **33.4% improvement in awareness/knowledge on the content**. This substantial gain suggests training effectiveness in building participants' understanding of gender equality, leadership, and community roles in WASH. Qualitative feedback gathered from the compiled trainee group's evaluation forms (7) consistently reflects high levels of satisfaction with the content, facilitation style, and relevance to participants' daily lives. **Participants frequently mentioned increased self-awareness, value of gender equality, and improved understanding of leadership, power dynamics, and women's role in community WASH initiatives**. Many highlighted intentions to apply lessons to their personal and community engagement. The pre-and-post-test scores from this specific dataset, including positive feedback from participants across seven training locations, suggests strong relevance and results.[8]

The MTR data confirms the relevance of gender-responsive WASH services and that resources are well-equipped. There was appreciation for WLDS' contributions, yet existing needs for material and infrastructure support for WASH and other basic services are prevalent in the FGD sample. Interviews with staff from Oxfam and LPOs suggest some differences between camp and villages settings regarding implementing WASH interventions. They explained that Sittwe Township camps targeting Rohingya populations generally receive more aid and development services; so, residents tend to be familiar with community-led governance models and are thus more primed to form groups and comprehend training. However, they noted that negotiation and access was more challenging at times with camp leaders/CMCs. Alternatively, they reported that many village leaders were supportive and interested in WASH interventions. However, also in Sittwe, village literacy rates are usually lower and WASH governance group and training models are newer to community members. For other areas, literacy and language barrier are

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[8] This data sample is limited to one LPO in Y3. Some inconsistencies were noted in the Excel file, including mixed or unclear data in columns beyond the basic test scores (e.g., unexplained "Pre", "Post", "Unnamed" columns). It is unclear whether test scores were standardized across all training locations or facilitators, which could affect comparability. While the feedback is uniformly positive, it was collected through group discussions or facilitated notes from project staff, which may bias the data and limit the expression of negative experiences or constructive criticism.

high for both villages and camps, especially with Rohingya communities from Rakhine ethnic groups. Capacity levels and ethnocultural differences required more tailored curriculum materials and effort to deliver (as the project also did with GLP and MC trainings).

The one KII with a male community leader, who also joined the WASH group, also reflected his positive support for WLDS and reception of interventions. He shared several of the impacts he has observed on GE, women's participation in public life, social cohesion, and improved WASH conditions.

Triangulation of FGD and KII responses suggests that primary control over community services and resources (e.g., funds, infrastructure planning) is still mediated by male authorities or WASH group leaders ('male gatekeeping' as explained with examples and quotes under 1100). The project's participatory inclusive design and BCC approach is helping to address this, but it will likely require incremental shifts over time with sustained efforts. Women's access to and control over livelihoods skills, services and resources remains a critical need, as also emphasized in the evidence base. Yet, participation of women in WASH structures and services, as well as examples provided of other household and community meetings and affairs, still reflects a significant change. The majority of FGDs reported that previously, women were not permitted, confident, and/or aware of their right to participate in public life or engage in governance structures (e.g., WASH groups). A few male and female FGD participants also gave examples of women engaging in income generation with encouraging support of their husbands or families to do so. One participant shared a significant decision to sever ties with her husband who was unsupportive of her participation in women's empowerment work. She now manages her own property and financial decisions independently, a major shift. She expressed pride in her autonomy.

As mentioned, staff KIIs emphasized that **WASH interventions served as an effective entry point to build community support and interest for GE and WR.** They explained that community members and leaders have keen interest in WASH access and improvement. And are more receptive to women's participation in WASH groups. This strategy seems logical and is corroborated by the other MTR evidence. For example,

"In family and community, the social norm is that it is unnecessary [for women] to work outside and should work inside of house. I got knowledge from Women Leadership in WASH sessions. I think, these stereotypes changed that women could work outside and got opportunities for women freely than before." (Rakhine female, aged 24, WASH Group member and GLP Alumni, Min Phuu Village).

"After joining the WASH Group, I have been doing more work, and people in the village are now relying on our group more than other groups. Since I've been doing this in the village, my parents are proud of me, and my family is recognizing my efforts." (Adult Rakhine female, WASH Group Accountant, Buu Ywet Ma Nyoe Village).

*"In the past, parents allowed boys to travel far for work but wouldn't let girls go. Now, women are going out and running businesses on their own. I'm currently trading in another town." (*Youth Rakhine female, WASH Group Accountant, Buu Ywet Ma Nyoe Village).

"While young men are more engaged in both MC and other gender-focused activities, reaching young women—especially through the GLP—has been more challenging due to restrictive social norms around

women's mobility and early marriage. Adult men and women are more involved in WASH group activities. They actively request to join and support WASH-related initiatives." (Senior WLDS staff member).

The quotes above and from discussions with project staff highlighted there are often even more restrictions for younger women's mobility, especially in Rohingya groups, due to the context of the military conscription law and specific ethno-cultural social norms. This poses challenges for them to engage in activities outside the home,

Increased knowledge and ability of adult and young women to access and lead inclusive and gender-responsive protection structures

Outcomes in this sphere (1220) remain largely pending due to delays and challenges to project implementation under this area to date. The evidence base reinforces that protection needs are high, and inclusive gender-responsive structures are severely lacking in target communities, highlighting the relevance of protection in projects that seek to protect women's rights and empower them. WLDS completed participatory protection assessments and training for project partners on IPE. WLDS partners are mobilizing actions to respond to the mapping of resources and needs of protection assessments recently finalized and apply practical knowledge. KIIs with partners reflects measured expectations for project contribution to increasing women's knowledge about protection services and structures and facilitating their access to protection support through mechanisms such as the planned IPE grants, protection groups and actions plans. The evidence also suggests that this endeavour will be complex and highly challenging since it is a new sector for all of partners, including OiM, while the target communities severely lack protection structures and services as compared to other sectors (although all basic services are critically under resourced). More capacity development and close hands-on support for partners to safely and effectively implement protection interventions remains crucial.

Although the project has not implemented specific protection interventions beyond assessments, some female FGD participants reported using the confidence, skills, knowledge and visibility they gained through WLDS to support community conflict resolution and specific GBV/DV cases while a few others cited reductions in observed violence against women and specific male behaviours that perpetuate violence (i.e., drinking, harassment). Such examples demonstrate that involvement in WLDS has motivated some to proactively to support community protection and reflect their perception of positive effects in helping to reduce harmful behaviours, GBV and DV. The changes expressed by FGD participants about changes to their own behaviours and actions in thie regard hold more credible weight evaluatively speaking; perceptions and claims related to wider community GBV/DV changes or reductions cannot be verified and should be interpreted with caution. Do no harm is critical in considering specific capacities and associated risks amongst women who engage in protection support. The accounts also reflect the relevance of the project design to focus on protection, and plans in progress to increase these activities.

ToC Pillar 3/1300 Outcomes **Findings in response to** KEQ 3*: "What are the early signals of project contribution to impact on women's leadership and decision-making power in governance, peacebuilding, and development processes in Rakhine State?"*

Increased participation and leadership of adult and young women leadership in relevant decision-making spaces on governance, peacebuilding, and development processes

Early signals of project contribution and progress towards impact under Pillar 3 are more limited as compared to other Pillars. They are found primarily through increased participation and leadership of adult and young women in WASH community-level governance structures, project-supported events and informal decision-making roles in households and communities. FGD and KII participants also shared a few examples of women gaining greater access and voice in broader community affairs beyond the project.

Leadership capacity gains among women and WROs/CSOs are primarily evident among GLP alumni, WASH groups, and direct WLDS implementing partners. Other specific women's groups, WROs, and CSOs have yet to receive project support – this is planned to take place during in the remainder of the project. Implementation of ToC Pillar 3 (1300) activities has been especially difficult due to worsening civic space, conflict, insecurity, and restrictions on inter-community engagement. These conditions have made Pillar 3 outcomes even more challenging to advance than Pillars 1 (1100) and 2 (1200). In response, WLDS partners significantly revised and scaled back these activities. They strategically adapted interventions to focus on feasible and safe entry points for promoting women's leadership in governance, peace, development, and recovery. Further revisions will be needed to align with available time and resources and to rebalance priorities across other outcome areas. PMF indicators and impact expectations under 1300 require the most adjustment, as many are unfeasible or inappropriate in the current context.

As with the other pillars, the type and number of activities implemented varies by WLDS partners, and signals of progress are different across target groups and locations. Available services, service providers and governance structures vary significantly between WLDS target areas. All Sittwe Township target areas are controlled by the SAC, while the rest of WLDS target townships are controlled by the AA. Civil society actors are more permitted and active in Rohingya camps in Sittwe. These are governed internally by CMCs and receive more resources from the international community (while needs are still heavily unmet). All the other WLDS' target camps and villages receive far fewer services and resources.

About 50% of participants across WASH, GLP, and MC FGDs, cited more access to and/or leadership roles in spaces that directly and indirectly influence community-level activities and decisions. The most common examples provided were participation and decisions in WASH groups, community events (e.g., IWD and 16 days of activism, religious ceremonies), needs assessments, GE/WRs and WASH awareness and promotion, and instances of consultation and decision-making with local authorities and other non-project supported governance spaces (health, hygiene, infrastructure, religious affairs and protection).

<u>Increased skills of adult and young women and girls to take on leadership roles and participate in relevant decision-making processes</u>

While the specific term 'skills' was not commonly used by FGD participants (and FGD notes are also impacted by translation), reported increases in confidence, awareness, knowledge, motivation and actions are inherently associated with skills enhancement (1310). Similarly, women's leadership is less frequently described in terms of direct and formalized leadership roles but are more so evidenced through the increases in participation and associated actions taken by females in community spaces. T**he reported**

positive confidence shifts described under 1100, especially by youth and female FGD participants, were often framed not only as personal growth, but as tools for participating and influencing broader community norms and violence prevention or support for those dealing with domestic conflict or protection challenges. Their narratives often referenced prior fear, silence, or social/public exclusion and discrimination, followed by a transition to speaking, participating, and being respected, and holding semi-formal roles in other community spaces and formal roles in project-supported WASH groups and activities. These contributed to more opportunities and public platforms for women to practice speaking and leading, recognition from peers, which in turn reinforced internal confidence and opportunities to influence others, increasing motivation and self-worth. In several FGDs, participants described a "before and after" transformation. Several women described how their newfound confidence was validated by external sources such as their husband, neighbours and religious or community leaders. Reported accounts expressed that this led participants to take initiative, organize outreach, and advise and inspire others. Many believed this increased community visibility of project participants, modeling alternative roles as effective and trusted decision makers and supportive sources. The examples and quotes from FGD participants reflect emerging changes and the connection between direct project participation, skills and confidence building and leadership and decision-making power of women:

- An GLP Alumni FGD participant described taking on a leadership role in a local women's religious group where she shared gender knowledge, prompting open discussion and support among members, and shifted her father's perspective on female authority in the home.
- Another GLP Alumni recounted intervening in a case of domestic violence at her camp, supporting the survivor, and facilitating a resolution through community structures, which was respected and accepted.
- Another shared that she has been actively assisting women in resolving gender issues in the camps, especially in situations when CMCs offer unfair solutions for women. She observed increasing support from men for her efforts.
- *"People have started accepting the discussions. When [WASH Group is] presenting the needs of the village to the elders, they have accepted it and given positive feedback, showing more willingness to collaborate."* (Youth Rakhine female, WASH Group Accountant, Buu Ywet Ma Nyoe Village).
- *"In places that offer maternity care, they [GLP Alumni] often share awareness about 24 hours of unpaid care work and encourage men to help women around them."* (Adult Rohingya female, GLP Alumni, KDK Camp). [An example of GLP project participants taking action to support with GE awareness in community services beyond the project].

Staff partner KIIs reported shifts here as well. They shared examples of women in their target areas initiating and leading community meetings, taking part in planning and facilitating IWD events, 16 Days of Activism campaigns, and the project's participatory needs assessments. For example, a partner reported that one female participant was elected as a CMC member, and another gained employment with a local NGO – both are very rare in the Rakhine context. In line with the FGD accounts, they expressed that female WASH group members and GLP participants are more confident and have gained skills to lead community aid and development planning and assessments and have been invited to engage directly in community-level or administrative consultations.

"Young women are becoming more involved in charitable organizations in their villages and taking on leadership roles…Adult women are also becoming more aware of and accepting gender equality and women's rights, and are becoming more actively involved in the welfare of their own villages, and even breaking down the traditional barriers against women, they are encouraging their daughters to participate in village development and welfare activities." (LPO ED).

"GLP alumni had to deal directly with local authorities for assessment permissions—this shift showed their increased access and ability." (Senior WLDS staff members).

While 1310 and its indicators focus on women specifically, some of the FGDs were gender-mixed with overlaps between types of participants, and the sample is quite small rendering disaggregation more challenging and less useful. Yet, increases of relevant skills of MCs are reasonable to highlight as signals of change that arguably favour women's advancement here, since social norms and governance structures center men as highly influential gatekeepers of women's leadership. In several communities, formal power and decision-making remain male-dominated, and women's roles are still "invited" rather than embedded. Therefore, positive role-modeling and support of men is therefore important to changing these norms while the burden should not and cannot be placed solely on women to do so. Analysis of the FGD accounts also reflected that the permission of men is still required for women to hold leadership roles and make decisions. Some comments by both female and male FGD participants demonstrate signals of progress while also highlighting patriarchal norms at the same time (see quotes below). It is unreasonable to expect deep power structural changes at this stage of the project, while unequal and patriarchal power structures will require consistent intervention across several actors to dismantle.

"There is some consideration about whether to involve women [in community groups and leadership roles]. It's about giving women a place. We will need to discuss this with the villagers." (Adult Rakhine male, MC Alumni, Thit Poke Taung Village).

"Some women are married and can only participate with their husband's permission." (Adult Rakhine female, WASH Group Accountant, Buu Ywet Ma Nyoe Village).

"To overcome women's leadership barriers… [provide] activities to men and young men the same as GLP in future activities." (Rakhine female, aged 24, WASH group member and GLP Alumni, Min Phuu Village).

These nuanced statements validate the project's approach to engage men to support women's rights and empowerment as a part of the process for women to be recognized and embraced as equal rights-holders (with or without male endorsement) and feel agency and safety to make decisions and be leaders in their homes and communities. They also represent an inherent complexity and risk for GE and WR efforts in general – engaging men to support women's empowerment and adapting content to be culturally-appropriate, without implicitly reinforcing the message (to both men *and* women) that men 'permit' women to have rights and agency. Nor that a condition for women to engage in public and economic life means taking on more work without equitable distribution of labour between men and women across these spheres. For example, a male community leader's account is reflective of this dynamic, *"Recently, during a distribution of women's hygiene products, the men just sat and watched without helping. But the*

women in the WASH group worked happily together and made sure everything went smoothly. We saw that and felt proud of them."

Two GLP alumni (one from a village and the other a camp) both mentioned that women's heavy burden of unpaid household responsibilities, combined with their need to generate income, limits their time and ability to actively engage in gender advocacy.

Such patterns are evidenced in so-called 'developed' societies (like Canada) where the road to gender equality bring both benefits *and* more costs for women. The gender distribution of unpaid care work has relatively improved and there are more women in the paid workforce. But alongside the rise of dual earner households, there are more expectations and demands for women, as compared to their male household counterparts. Women disproportionately shoulder both the burden of unpaid care work at home and the challenges of navigating the gendered labour market, leading to a "double burden" that negatively impacts their well-being and economic opportunities. This imbalance is rooted in traditional gender roles and societal expectations, with women often taking on the majority of household chores and childcare responsibilities, while also facing barriers to career advancement and equal pay. While GE initiatives aim to address these disparities increased demands on women can also exacerbate existing inequalities. [9]

WLDS partners are aware of these risks, and the paradoxical nature of advancing GE and women's role in public/economic life. The project includes specific components to mitigate creating a "double burden" for women (e.g., care burden solutions grants, childcare to enable participation, relevant messaging in MC activities). Creating buy-in and palatable content for complex concepts that challenge entrenched social norms, and status quo involves inherent trade-offs and compromises, especially in such a high-risk and volatile context. Overall, WLDS partners have demonstrated strong proficiency and adaptive capacity in navigating this 'tight rope' act. It is also reasonable to assume far less likelihood for women's empowerment and GE without the presence of committed actors and programming such as WLDS and the respective partners. It is also important to emphasize that several statements from both men and women in FGDs expressed that men should and are sharing more domestic tasks as women engage more in public life or that male household members were caring for children while women attended project trainings/activities. The majority of FGD participants shared views and reported practices strongly aligned with GE and WRs and demonstrated meaningful critical self-reflection, also recognizing that more time and collective effort is required needed to create widespread norm change and women's empowerment.

"There is still a strong need to change men's perspectives towards women... Only when more men become aware will it be possible to truly promote the role of women," (consensus statement, FGD with MC multipliers.

"For women to have more opportunities more opportunities, we men need to provide a lot of support. There are many barriers — from the village, the family, and even within the women themselves. We men must help remove those barriers. We also have a role in preventing violence." (Adult Rakhine male, MC Alumni and WASH Group member, Ka Paing Chaung Village).

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[9] See: Ortiz-Ospina, E., Tzvetkova, S., and Roser, M. (2018, updated 2024). *"Women's Employment."* Our World in Data; Moser M. and Burlock, A. (2018). "*Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*". Statistics Canada.

The intensified conflict and crises in Rakhine have presented limitations for WLDS (and others) to work on specific peacebuilding initiatives, with high risks and barriers for civil society to use direct language about peace, governance, development and advocacy. WLDS has therefore applied a more indirect, low-profile approach to third nexus, in order to maintain do no harm, relations with authorities, and project viability. Therefore, related positive changes are best viewed from the lens of social cohesion gains and access to opportunities for communication between diverse ethno-cultural and language groups within communities. The multi-day trainings for MCs and GLPs required travel and included members from across difference communities offering a rare chance for engagement and building ties. Associated examples and dynamics and perceived contributions of WLDS are often described in the KIIs and FGDs through changes in daily interactions, group collaboration, and reduced tension, especially in camp settings and mixed-group activities. **Almost 40% of FGD participants reported increased inter-group communication and cooperation; almost 20% noted language learning and cross-group use; and almost 30% described enhanced conflict resolution, mutual support, or relevant norm changes**. Several KIIs also echoed progress towards strengthened social cohesion, improved cross-group dialogue, and emerging capacities that support peace at interpersonal and group levels. This especially difficult in Rakhine's ethno-culturally and linguistically diverse and displaced communities.

"[Before] women couldn't speak or understand both the Rakhine and Burmese languages. Now, about 50% of them are comfortable with the languages." (Male community leader)

"Even having different communities coming together for trainings really gave them more understanding of each other – this is also related to peace. We don't name as peace in our activities but bringing people together and interactions create more understanding and builds some conditions for peace." (Senior WLDS staff).

"Together [project beneficiaries) they are training in one place. And speaking about their situations and sharing about improving [their] villages and camps. Between Rakhine, Muslim communities – talking about WASH, GBV, together." (LPO staff member).

"The [project] identifies those differences and builds mutual understanding, respect, and recognition…we aim to work together harmoniously in our [target areas] …and we believe that we can effectively implement reforms in line with that aim." (LPO staff member).

The qualitative data suggests more progress here in camp settings where humanitarian structures exist, and more challenging in remote or conservative villages, where similar conditions for inter-group engagement have been more limited due to the operating context and risks.

Increased capacity of women's groups and CSOs/WROs to support participation and leadership of adult and young women in relevant decision-making processes

For reasons already discussed, there are limited results evidenced here (1320); the project has yet to implement the majority of activities that support WROs/CSOs, beyond the consortium partners. It is worthwhile to highlight pertinent progress and changes within the consortium membership and the plausible causal linkages. KIIs with Oxfam and three LPOs staff reflected on **the benefits of working as a consortium and the cross-organizational learning and strong personal and organizational growth –**

especially in adaptive capacity, feminist programming, policies and MEAL, the triple nexus approach, and the financial and operational aspects of implementing a large complex donor program. WLDS partners demonstrated immense commitment to serving communities despite the high risks and level of effort required. All LPOs shared concrete improvements for organizational development gained through partnership in WLDS - on-the-job experience of implementation, technical support and trainings.

"Through this project, Oxfam supported our organization's capacity through training, technical support, consultation and collaboration, training modules support, and advice. Building capacity in our organization to provide training, conduct surveys, and develop project plans are the most effective outcomes." (LPO Executive Director).

"This is the very first project for women's leadership for [our organization] – improved our technical skills… Now we can work more systematically and confidently in this area…Now we have a Gender Equality Policy, a PSEA policy, and better understanding of women's empowerment… Before this project we had never done this." (LPO staff member).

"The CAT4GTO assessment… helped us analyze ourselves and where to improve… This helps institutional and staff capacity strengthening." (LPO Executive Director).

Organizational and staff development over the course of WLDS in highly challenging security and operational conditions reflects partners' strong potential to serve and benefit disadvantaged communities in the long-term. LPOs and staff members based within Rakhine are role models who can influence positive social norm change, facilitate women's participation, leadership and decision-making, and support other WROs/CSOs through knowledge transfer and technical support. The project is yet to expand to other WROs/CSOs but has identified specific groups to mobilize support during the remainder of the project through institutional grants and mentorship.

Investment in community partners to promote and advance GE and WR is especially needed given there is a clearly a dearth of women's groups and dedicated CSOs with the expertise and resources to foster women's leadership, access and capacity for decision making. This highlights a gap that WLDS seeks to support, which has started with the consortium members. Transferring knowledge and strengthening local institutions through OiM/WLDS LPOs offers potential for added value and return on this investment by extending the capacity gains amongst LPOs. Commitments to additional CSO/WRO/women's groups should be carefully balanced within the realistic capacity of WLDS partners to responsibly oversee grants and mentorship, while simultaneously implementing their own CAT4GJ action plans and a several other grants mechanisms and activities.

Increased ability of women leaders and CSOs, particularly WROs to access relevant decision-making spaces and bodies

The outcomes and substantial progress in this area (1320) remains to be evidenced, as per above. However, MTR discussions and evidence suggest that 1330 is a duplicative outcome area that is already captured within the other outcomes. This also requires an unnecessary level of effort for the project to separately measure, especially given the extremely challenging operating conditions that partners face. It

would be reasonable to streamline 1330 within the other PMF outcomes and indicators. This revision does not limit these project's aims in practice (see recommendations section and Annex D for more details).

The overall KIIs demonstrate that WLDS partners recognize both the positive shifts identified and the structural and contextual limitations to broader impact and challenges for sustainability across the ToC Pillars, especially for Pillar 3. Accordingly, WLDS partners are in the process of revising 1300 activities, PMF aspects for feasibility given the contextual realities and likelihood of such barriers continuing. This includes focusing efforts and related impact expectations to women's and WRO/CSO leadership and decision making within community-levels and civil society forums, rather than at inter-community, State and National levels. And, seeking appropriate and strategic opportunities for advocacy with the international civil society and donor community.

Key findings by Theme

The evaluation applied a rubrics method to analyse triangulated data and articulate overall findings presented herein for each MTR theme: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness of program approaches and interventions, effectiveness of organizational strengthening, effectiveness of ways of working, sustainability and impact (divided and assessed by the three ToC Pillars). The evaluator developed specific rubric scales to assess each of these 9 themes, as presented in the MTR 'Data Analysis Plan'. WLDS team focal points reviewed and validated the rubrics and overall framework prior to data analysis.

Each rubric includes a colour-coded rating scale from 1 to 4, representing weak (red), fair (orange), good (light green) and strong (dark green) performance with a ranking criterion for each level. There are applicable variations in language based on each theme and its criteria. An 'unrated' option (gray) is also included in case the evidence base is too ambiguous and/or insufficient to enable a justified rating on performance for a given theme. Annex B provides the detailed rubric scales for each evaluation theme and respective criteria for 1-4 and 'unrated' scale levels.

Rubric ratings for all themes with narrative explanations and key evidence for these assessments are provided in the following sub-sections.

Relevance

Table 1: MTR rubrics rating for project relevance

Rubric Rating	3 (Good)
Criteria	The triangulated evidence base shows good performance on this theme overall, with some inconsistencies or variance. There are at least a few different data sources that are reliable, valid and credible related to this theme that validate good performance.
Explanation of assessment and key evidence	
The project's adaptive triple nexus design—integrating humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding approaches—has proven highly appropriate for promoting gender equality, women's leadership, and protection in fragile and displacement-affected settings. This is particularly relevant in the face of ongoing humanitarian crises, entrenched gendered power dynamics, and the widespread absence of inclusive, gender-responsive services and resources across target communities. **Efforts to tailor interventions for ethno-cultural appropriateness (e.g., faith-based considerations) and accessibility (e.g., literacy and language) demonstrate strong responsiveness to diverse community needs.** The extent to which these adaptations specifically	

addressed the needs of Rohingya populations in particular (as a key project aim) remains a bit unclear. While there is no evidence of specific weakness in this area and Rohingya have been included in WLDS interventions, the available data is not sufficiently explicit to draw firm conclusions.

Targeting gender equality, women's rights, and social cohesion through trusted and acceptable entry points—particularly WASH interventions—has supported community trust and buy-in, including from local leaders. KIIs and FGDs reflect broad consensus on the project's strong relevance to both personal and community-level needs. Partner monitoring data also corroborates participant satisfaction with interventions to date, including the dignity kits (PDM data) and training content for GLP, Male Champions, and Women's Leadership in WASH (trainee evaluation forms).

The project's design is found to be highly relevant, while implementation of activities and outputs has not fully aligned with its ambitions at present. The scale and depth of basic services support have not been possible to achieve yet, while capacity building for WROs and CSOs (beyond LPOs) to strengthen support women's access to decision-making spaces is nascent. While external constraints have limited the project's ability to reach a rating of "strong" relevance for implementation, the project still managed to pivot quickly and deliver additional humanitarian aid in response to Cyclone Mocha. This is a notable example of relevance during implementation and the partners' capacity to apply the triple nexus approach. Expanding the sectors of implementation as planned, especially in livelihoods, is critical to project relevance and meeting community needs going forward. Given the current challenging operating context and limited remaining timeframe, difficult trade-offs will be necessary in selecting priorities, even as the relevance of the triple nexus approach remains strong.

Efficiency

Table 2: MTR rubrics rating for project efficiency

Rubric Rating	3 (Good)
Criteria	The triangulated evidence base shows good performance on this theme overall, with some inconsistencies or variance. There are at least a few different data sources that are reliable, valid and credible related to this theme that validate good performance.
Explanation of assessment and key evidence	

If assessed solely against the original activity plan, budget, and burn rate, project efficiency could appear limited. However, such a judgment must be contextualized within the exceptional challenges of implementation. Partners faced numerous constraints beyond their control, including escalating armed conflict, forced military recruitment, shifting territorial control, camp closures, disrupted and poor internet and phone communications, currency volatility, limited cash availability, procurement delays, and emerging and new humanitarian crises. Shortages of sufficient HR in remote areas further compounded operational difficulties despite dedicated attempts to fill gaps and recruit strategically with volunteers, consultants and sharing staff resources as much as possible.

A significant gap also existed between the project's official start date (March 2022) and the timeframe in which meaningful implementation became feasible—approximately from the beginning of Year 3. Early delays to official approvals during the PIP and baseline phase for in Year 1, followed by Cyclone Mocha and intensified conflict in Year 2, required ongoing adaptation and recalibration, delaying activities on the ground from the start, with continuing pauses based on local conditions. A more reasonable timeframe to use for assessing the efficiency of project implementation and expenditure vs the plan and budget is between 1 to 1.5 years.

Despite these high-risk and fluid conditions, evidence—including KIIs, revised activity plans, project reports, and external validation from credible news and international community agency sources—demonstrate that consortium partners responded with agility and persistence to adjust plans in real time. Partners applied creative solutions, such as bundling interventions during rare windows of community access, shifting to remote modalities for team meetings and trainings, procuring materials jointly, coordinating with other humanitarian actors, negotiating appropriate with authorities. While delivery fell short of initial targets and reductions in scope were required, significant progress was still made, particularly in Year 3 while the consortium also integrated an unexpected response to Cyclone Mocha to meet urgent community WASH needs.

Given the circumstances, it is difficult to determine what more could have been done to improve efficiency without severely compromising safety, feminist principles, local and donor regulations, or program quality. One important insight offered was that it could have been more efficient to plan and implement the basic service interventions and grants in parallel with GE/MC training and BCC rather than the heavy frontloading of the latter. Yet, it wouldn't have been feasible to do this in reality, given the operating conditions and external barriers and the requirement for participatory assessments before service delivery. This is a lesson to retain for future programming that includes

significant training/BCC and basic service delivery interventions. The consortium's commitment to adapting and delivering as much as possible under extreme constraints while also ensuring context-awareness, risk management, due diligence and appropriate resource use supports a rubric score of 3 (good).

Key aspects for improving project efficiency going forward are:
- Apply experience and lessons over the last 3 years to plan more realistically
- Focus efforts more narrowly to prioritize interventions and invest in community structures that will yield the most impact and potential for sustainability.
- The consortium's ability to make critical decisions that prevent overextension amid ongoing external challenges.
- Proactive planning and actions in preparation for the close-out phase to ensure ethical and responsible exit strategies that support a smooth transition for project-supported communities and organizations.

Effectiveness: Program approaches and Interventions

Table 3: MTR rubrics rating for effectiveness of project approaches and interventions

Rubric Rating	4 (Strong)
Criteria	The triangulated evidence base shows strong performance on this theme with minimal or no inconsistencies and variance. There are several different data sources that are reliable, valid and credible related to this theme that validate strong performance.
Explanation of assessment and key evidence	

Evidence reviewed emphasized that WLDS triple nexus adaptive design is both essential and well-received. The integration of both development and humanitarian interventions, with more limited but tangible efforts for peace through the framing of social cohesion (due to the context) has proven successful within the constraints of what the project could feasibly deliver. The built-in flexibility enabled the project to adapt appropriately in times of shocks and crisis escalation, such as the pivot to respond with DKs after Cyclone Mocha. Partners effectively working with existing WASH structures and participants already engaged with the project as a means to build capacity, visibility and trust in target communities.

Pervasive gendered social norms, coupled with strong community calls to expand the project, underscore the effectiveness of WLDS's feminist approach to all project interventions, and the ways the partners have integrated GE and WRs across them, while being responsive to local ethno-cultural differences. Triangulated evidence strongly indicates this approach has **successfully promoted awareness, knowledge, and personal transformation amongst direct participants with signs of gradual behaviour changes and social norm change within the wider communities.**
Community members directly engaged in GLP, Male Champion, and WASH interventions demonstrated increased knowledge, confidence, skills, and motivation to support GE, WR, and gender-responsive WASH. FGD and KII data provided several examples of women taking on more active roles—largely in project-supported initiatives but also within their households and broader community decision-making spaces (inter-community, State and National spaces remain out of reach due to the context). Many participants also reported perceptions that they are influencing others in their communities to respect, accept and support women's empowerment and leadership. Peace and advocacy are sensitive and high-risk components to directly advance – the project's approach to reframe the third nexus in terms of social cohesion and communication through opportunities for inter-group discourse and exchange is an effective means to advance these aims in a low-profile and safe way.

While the scale and depth of these changes vary by location and claims about external influence in the KII and FGD accounts cannot be fully verified, the overall evidence supports the effectiveness of the project's strategy as per its Theory of Change, especially in cases where the conditions allowed for the more interventions and supportive touch points. This supports the validity of the theory of change pathways that aim to build GE/WR champions through GLP and MC alumni and to embed GE/WR content into basic services interventions—such as the Women's Leadership in WASH training and the supportive actions taken by established WASH groups (e.g., hygiene campaigns, awareness raising, community infrastructure).

The gradual spread of changes from direct participants to wider community members reflects the long-term investment required to shift social norms, particularly in such a severe humanitarian and conflict-affected setting where participants' time, resources, and attention are severely constrained. **Planned interventions in livelihoods and protection, continued support for WASH groups, and strengthening support to other WROs/CSOs hold promise to deepen and sustain change. Success and effectiveness going forward will depend on the**

project's ability to manage these integrated and complex components realistically within the remaining timeframe while continuing to adapt to difficult operating conditions. The overall evidence, especially the shared staff and community experiences and reflections, provides a credible basis for assessing the project's approaches and interventions thus far as effective, warranting a rubric score of 4 (strong).	

Effectiveness: Organizational Strengthening

Table 4: MTR rubrics rating for effectiveness of organizational strengthening

Rubric Rating	3 (Good)
Criteria	The triangulated evidence base shows minimal or inconsistent performance on this theme. There are some gaps in data reliability, validity and credibility related to this theme that limit a higher performance rating.

Explanation of assessment and key evidence

KIs with staff from Oxfam (OCA and OiM) and LPOs indicate that both individuals and organizations have built capacity through their engagement in the WLDS project. Gains were attributed to on-the-job learning through implementation, technical support from OiM, specific trainings, and cross-organizational experience sharing that promoted tacit learning. Notable areas of capacity growth included understanding and skills related to the triple nexus approach, adaptive management, GE programming, Feminist-MEAL, and financial/administrative management for complex donor-funded projects. One LPO took initiative to establish new PSEA and GE policies as a result of involvement in WLDS. The project has clearly prioritized organizational strengthening and made investments to at both staff and institutional levels.

The overall score of 3 (good) errs on the positive side. A score of 2.5 would be more accurate but the rubric has been developed for whole numbers and rankings. The evaluator weighted partners' self-reports more heavily in respect for their perceptions and knowledge about organizational capacities and changes and considered the following print factors:

- The absence of organizational assessment documents provided for the MTR (recommended for review at endline stage).
- Partners' resilience and efforts to persevere and grow within extremely challenging circumstances and factors out of their control.
- The expressed commitment to the ongoing CAT4JO processes.
- The expectations for the rate and growth of organizations within the timeframes and pressures of the project thus far and the amount that can feasibility be done simultaneously to build capacity across a complex multi-sector project, requiring staged prioritization of efforts.

Organizational strengthening is a visible and an ongoing priority of WLDS, however the evidence suggests effectiveness here can be improved and limitations to consider in future are highlighted below.

Practical challenges affecting capacity development effectiveness:
Staff turnover has been significant across the consortium due to the challenging context for recruiting and retaining HR. With frequent staffing changes and many new team members, continued onboarding and capacity-building efforts have been required. While institutional memory and peer learning help transfer knowledge, these changes naturally slow momentum and require ongoing investment in individual and team development.

Training modalities have also affected effectiveness. Due to travel and access constraints out of the project's control, remote training has been the primary method of capacity building. However, partners reported persistent internet and power challenges, which limited full participation and learning. These constraints—also experienced by the evaluator—hinder the effectiveness of remote training as a substitute for in-person engagement. When limited opportunities for in-person meetings/workshops have occurred, they were highly valued but often required to be prioritized for operational planning over deep technical learning.

Self-reporting considerations: While all KIs expressed the value of OiM's support and offered examples of progress related organizational strengthening, some evidence of positive bias is present in self-reporting as well as areas for more development. LPOs expressed the need for additional technical support, particularly to apply certain approaches such as GBV cases/protection interventions, grant mechanisms, and Listening Exercises. A couple different KIs requested Oxfam to station technical staff in LPO areas —an unfeasible solution given logistical and resource constraints, but one that signals some existing gaps in confidence and capability.

Technical capacity in protection: Protection remains a new thematic area for all LPOs and for OiM, requiring heavier investment than other familiar programming sectors. Initial steps have been taken to build capacity in this area, including the recent onboarding of a Gender and Protection Coordinator at OiM and a training on IPE. Partners still require additional materials, training and coaching. The integration of protection technical capacity is progressing but is not yet fully embedded across the consortium and WLDS team members.

Variability across partners and level of effort required to support capacity development: Efforts to build LPOs capacity have had meaningful, though variable, effects. As would be expected amongst a diversity of peers, capacity among partners remains uneven. Differences in partners' experience with large donor-funded projects—particularly regarding work-planning and PMFs—have affected the pace and consistency of delivery. Some partners struggle with overambitious planning and are still building requisite internal systems to manage complex reporting and implementation requirements. This imbalance requires more intensive support from Oxfam, which has implications for workload and time management, especially under tight deadlines. A challenge remains with the need for balance between partners' comfort in making the approaches their own in context and Oxfam guiding and providing all details. The rubric rating reflects a consortium-level judgment. There is significant variability across partners in terms of baseline capacities, staffing continuity, and progress made to date. Such variation is expected, but it reinforces a more conservative score.

Early Stages of CAT4GJO: Organizational self-assessments (CAT4GJO) were completed recently, and action plans are just beginning implementation in Year 4. These assessments were not submitted as evidence for the MTR, and their impact is not yet demonstrable. This further supports the conclusion that tailored, partner-specific investments are still in early stages, and their effectiveness remains to be seen. It is advised these documents are provided to the evaluation team for review during the endline evaluation.

The project has been effective in strengthening organizational capacity in key areas and in managing a large, complex triple nexus intervention. OiM has made commendable efforts to support partners despite practical barriers. The recent start of CAT4GJO action plan implementation signals positive momentum. With the planned continued support, the effectiveness and outcomes for organizational strengthening are expected to improve further during the remainder of the project.

Effectiveness: Ways of Working

Table 5: MTR rubrics rating for effectiveness of ways of working

Rubric Rating	3 (Good)
Criteria	The triangulated evidence base shows good performance on this theme overall, with some inconsistencies or variance. There are at least a few different data sources that are reliable, valid and credible related to this theme that validate good performance.
Explanation of assessment and key evidence	

The evidence base reflects that WLDS has demonstrated good effectiveness in its ways of working, underpinned by feminist principles, participatory decision-making, flexibility, and a strong commitment to localization and collaboration. A key strength is the shift from top-down to consultative leadership, which LPOs widely appreciated as a distinctive and empowering approach different from previous experiences. The structured coordination and governance mechanisms—including quarterly joint planning sessions and the Steering Committee (SC), Project Advisory Committee (PAC), and Project Management Unit (PMU) bodies—have facilitated regular engagement of both senior leadership and field teams. These structures promote shared accountability, inclusive planning, and transparency, exemplified by the rotational chair role and open budget discussions, aligning with "decolonized" and feminist development practices.

Oxfam (OCA and OiM) and all LPOs highlighted strong collaboration and appreciation for the WLDS consortium and joint implementation ways of working. The leadership and consortium approaches taken have encouraged exchange of perspectives and joint reflection, reinforcing trust and adaptation. Oxfam's role as the GAC contract holder is viewed as fair, flexible, and supportive, validating its legitimacy as a feminist project lead. External coordination, particularly during the Cyclone Mocha response, demonstrated the consortium's ability to adapt rapidly, build synergies with other actors, and maintain community trust despite operational constraints. Application of GE and triple nexus program approaches were highlighted as especially effective.

The consensus-based approach, while valued for inclusivity and transparency, has proven time-intensive and, at times, inefficient. Prolonged consultation slowed decision-making and created bottlenecks—especially around MEAL adjustments and activity reductions. Differing partner priorities and expectations have made it difficult to streamline or scale back workplans – a requirement

given the context. While this reflects strong commitment to community needs, it has also revealed unrealistic expectations about feasibility within the operating conditions and timelines.

Uneven capacity levels across consortium members (as detailed above) can complicate joint planning. While some partners adapted pragmatically to the evolving context, others resisted necessary reductions—possibly due to funding uncertainty or unclear timelines (i.e., expectations for an NCE). A lack of consensus on what to prioritize or reduce calls for clearer, more decisive leadership to navigate feasibility in the project's final stages.

The evidence emphasizes that the ways of working should largely be retained for the remaining implementation period however project effectiveness and efficiency overall may benefit from a slight shift in balancing consultation levels with operational efficiency. This includes clarifying which decisions require full consultation, and which can proceed with more streamlined leadership—while maintaining transparency in rationale and process. Stronger, more directive guidance may be necessary to align expectations and ensure feasibility within the compressed timeline, especially with the upcoming close-out phase.

Despite its challenges, the WLDS consortium's ways of working reflect a deep commitment to feminist values, collective learning, and localization. These strengths, alongside demonstrated adaptability and inclusive governance, merit a rubric score of 3 (Good). Upholding collaborative and decolonized practices require due compromise, time and investment; the overall ways of working are aligned with the project's (and GAC) values and objectives for feminist international assistance.

Sustainability

This rubric and respective criteria differ from other themes as it assesses the forward-looking likelihood for sustainability and long-term benefits. The scale levels are 1 (unlikely), 2 (somewhat likely), 3 (likely) and 4 (high likely) and the respective criteria consider evidence of expressed interest, commitment and actions of beneficiaries, stakeholders and project partners to continue, grow, embed and resource efforts and structures beyond the project.

Table 6: MTR rubrics rating for sustainability

Rubric Rating	2 (Somewhat Likely)
Criteria	The triangulated evidence base shows early signals of likelihood for sustainability of the WLDS community structures (WASH Committees, GLP alumni, Male Champions) to support potential long-term actions and benefits beyond the project timeframe. This is demonstrated by strong expressed interest and commitment by some group members across at least a few target areas. There are some gaps in data reliability, validity and credibility that limit a higher ranking.
Explanation of assessment and key evidence	

The assessment of sustainability primarily focuses on the WASH groups and individuals directly engaged through the GLP and MC interventions, where project implementation has progressed the most, and sufficient evidence. A broader assessment of other pending interventions and community structures is not possible at this stage. The limited remaining project timeframe and persistent contextual challenges should be realistically acknowledged as key constraints that may hinder long-term sustainability, calling for robust exit strategies. **WASH groups and GLP/MC Alumni show the most potential to contribute to sustained results, particularly to support social norm change, women's leadership and decision-making roles and access to opportunities and resources.** The establishment and trainings for WASH groups have been well received by communities, with WASH Groups demonstrating motivation, capacity gains, and growing autonomy. FGDs and KIIs noted examples of WASH groups independently organizing hygiene campaigns, soap-making, and clean-up activities, sometimes with minimal external support. The vast majority of GLP, MC and WASH FGD participants reported increases in awareness, knowledge, confidence, motivation and skills, with many expressing an interest and commitment to continue these efforts work and support community development. Several of them offered examples of perceived improvements and positive changes they have influenced. Gains in capacity, interest and motivation are also supported by the reviewed sample of pre/post-test data and training evaluations. **The evidence suggests that personal transformation of direct MC, GLP and WASH group participants could facilitate long-term behavioral change with more influence on others in their communities and households.**

As findings are drawn from a limited qualitative sample that included accessible and active project participants, generalizability is limited. Additionally, several target camps have been forced to close, cutting off access to these participants and supportive structures —an unavoidable reality, but one that impacts overall sustainability targets and potential. Many planned interventions and community structures are in early stages, particularly in livelihood, protection and WRO/CSO institutional strengthening components. **The hierarchical**

gendered attitudes and behaviours that reinforce men's power over women are rooted in complex social norms, and further intensified by the worsened, widespread poly-crisis. Despite valuable gains and expressed satisfaction with the project approaches, community interests and priorities for GE/WR might be threatened given the significant needs for basic services, resources, and income. Transitioning from standalone trainings and BCC to more gender-responsive basic services and resources delivery is expected to support this challenge, while continuing to foster social cohesion, embed GE/WR content, and create opportunities for women's leadership and decision making.

At the time of data collection, the project lacked a comprehensive exit strategy without clear plans or actions taken specific to sustainability nor specific engagement with local actors about this. Several KIs were unclear or vague about this topic. Without timely mapping of which structures will be continued, how exactly transitions will be supported, and what capacity or resources are needed, there is a clear risk of losing gains made to date. A couple of KIs reflected that the WRO/CSO small grants mechanism planned for Year 4 presents a strategic opportunity to link community groups with local CSOs and governance bodies. The project review in June was expected to include a focus for sustainability planning (this could be the case, but such details became available after data collection).

Sustainability and long-term benefits will depend on how well WROs/CSOs, and the established community groups are supported to absorb and extend their efforts beyond WLDS, and increased access to gender-responsive basic services and resources. LPOs' long-standing partnerships with OiM suggest potential for continuity of collaborating on similar programming; this must be complemented with concrete transition plans, capacity strengthening, and embedded linkages. Due to the ongoing crises and conflict conditions, full independence of these structures is unlikely; instead, sustainability should be defined as integration into local systems as much as possible.

Given the limited time remaining and progress to date, a narrower focus is recommended. This includes consolidating support around promising community structures—particularly WASH groups—and identifying the most motivated and capable GLP and MC alumni to engage actively in other planned structures and interventions. Ensuring each group has a plan for governance and mobilization post-project will support potential for long-term benefits and feasibility. **Given the remaining implementation timeframe and the operating conditions, an NCE seems justified. An NCE would significantly support the consortium's ability to address more community needs, honour the commitments made, embed community structures, and maximize impact and sustainability.**

The positive momentum amongst WASH group members and those directly engaged in GLP and MC interventions has been achieved in a relatively short timeframe. The project was only able to focus heavily WASH groups and GLP/MC interventions in Year 3. As partners are yet to establish clear and ethical exit strategies, it would be prudent to shift more focus to sustainability plans and concrete actions at this stage. Based on available evidence and realistic contextual constraints, a **rubric score of 2 – Somewhat Likely** is appropriate. If current momentum is matched with targeted investment in exit planning, the likelihood of sustainability should improve notably.

Impact by Theory of Change Pillar

Impact ToC Pillar 1: Adoption of positive social norms and behaviors towards gender equality and rights of marginalized groups among participating communities in Rakhine State.

Table 7: MTR rubrics rating for project impact under ToC Pillar 1

Rubric Rating	3 (Good)
Criteria	The triangulated evidence base shows good overall signs of impact this ToC pillar, with some limited inconsistencies and/or variance. There are at least a few different data sources that are reliable, valid and credible related to this theme that validate a few key outcomes and related impact.
Explanation of assessment and key evidence	
The MTR evidence reveals promising and credible early contributions to social norm change, especially amongst direct participants of GLP and MC Alumni, and WASH groups. Triangulated evidence from FGDs, KIIs, and monitoring data substantiates meaningful shifts in awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours, amongst these groups. The strongest outcomes are seen in the personal growth and relational changes reported by GLP and MC alumni, including increased confidence, equitable attitudes, and commitment to sharing knowledge within their communities. WASH group members reported taking actions to improve hygiene and sanitation conditions of their households and communities, with the participation and leadership of women.	

Over two-thirds of FGD participants across all sampled groups reported gradual yet tangible behavioural shifts—such as men taking on household duties, women speaking up in public forums, and increased respect between spouses. These changes are most prominent at the individual and household levels but are also beginning to manifest in public and community spaces. While participants' reports of influencing others lend credence to the project's ripple effects, these accounts cannot yet confirm proportional community-wide shifts. The most reliable data reflects FGD participants' own changes, which carry greater evaluative weight than second-hand observations.

Evidence across the qualitative dataset is largely consistent and credible for Pillar 1 outcomes. **Participants from different gender, ethnic, and age backgrounds reported similar forms of transformation—most often related to breaking harmful gender stereotypes, developing confidence, and practicing equitable behaviours**. Feedback from GLP and MC participants highlighted the value of training content, especially the modules on gender roles, power dynamics, GBV, and leadership. These reflections align with the training feedback forms and improved post-test scores, with GLP and MC participants demonstrating significant knowledge gains, particularly among MC ToT participants. The reviewed monitoring data was limited in coverage, and raw data was not independently verified, affecting reliability.

Several quotes across the dataset illustrate deep internal reflection and behaviour change. Male FGD participants reported changes in their perceptions of women's value and contributions, citing improved family harmony and a stronger sense of respect. Women emphasized newfound confidence and the ability to engage in public life, share messages, and influence others. Youth participants—especially young men—acknowledged past harmful behaviours and expressed pride in their evolution, even in the face of male peer judgements. Both male and female participants also described advising others, spreading awareness, and challenging resistance—particularly among elders and men who hold more patriarchal traditional views.

Widespread change remains inconsistent and constrained by structural, cultural, and socio-economic factors. Positive changes seem largely concentrated among those with direct project exposure and GE still often depends on male permission rather than being accepted as an inherent right. Several FGD participants described resistance and called for broader male engagement and continued dialogue sessions to reinforce progress. They emphasized the need to reach those who remain skeptical or unaware, recognizing that lasting transformation will require longer-term, community-wide engagement. High community needs for livelihoods may create barriers to continued interest and prioritization for GE; the project is providing relevant support in Y4 to help improve economic opportunities and conditions. **This complex and non-linear pathway to norm change is also reinforced by other relevant evaluations and literature in the field.**

WLDS has built solid foundations for social norm change through direct participant engagement, relevant and tailored training approaches, and early signs of community diffusion. Continued support and scaled-up outreach—particularly among men and underserved groups—will be key to consolidating impact in the remaining implementation period. Given the strength of qualitative accounts and consistency across sources for Pillar 1, a rubric score of 3 (Good) is merited, with promising potential for deeper and broader shifts in social norms.

Impact ToC Pillar 2: Women's access to and control over gender-responsive basic services and resources, particularly in crisis-affected and disadvantaged areas of Rakhine State.

Table 8: MTR rubrics rating for project impact under ToC Pillar 2

Rubric Rating	2 (Fair)
Criteria	The triangulated evidence base shows some potential early signs of impact across this ToC Pillar with limited evidence and/or inconsistencies. There are some gaps in data reliability, validity and credibility.
Explanation of assessment and key evidence	
The overall evidence base indicates emerging, yet uneven, contributions to impact under Pillar 2, with pending progress on key sectors of livelihoods and protection. The contribution to impact is strongest in the WASH sector, where women's access, participation, leadership, and agency have increased. FGDs and KIIs, including the vast majority of female participants, consistently cite examples of women leading sanitation campaigns, managing water systems, and contributing to needs assessments—activities that enhance their skills, confidence, and community awareness and recognition. Triangulated evidence from pre/post-test training data (Women's Leadership in WASH), post-distribution monitoring (Dignity Kits), and the community feedback shows satisfaction and awareness gains. The WASH component serves as a gender-responsive and culturally strategic entry point for fostering trust and buy-in for communities on GE/WR, offering a foundation for broader impacts. However, evidence of change beyond WASH—in livelihoods or protection services—remains limited, largely due to implementation delays and contextual constraints.	

Efforts to engage women through participatory assessments (Rapid Care Assessments, Protection, WASH and Livelihoods) and in the DKs distribution are the starting point to increasing their voice and access in a range of basic services. These processes align well with feminist programming principles. These assessments were conducted recently, and the majority of planned Pillar 2 activities—particularly in protection and livelihoods are underway in Yr 4. WASH facilities remain a key priority for communities that are also being supported in Y4 working with established WASH groups. Consequently, the project's contribution to increased access and control over gender-responsive services is still to emerge in these areas. Early signs of change (e.g., increased support from MCs, some women engaging in business or leading tasks beyond WASH such as religious affairs and informal support to GBV cases) suggest promising potential and influence beyond the project supported activities. It is not possible to confirm meaningful or widespread impact at this stage, meriting a rubric score of 2 (Fair).

The project's approach to integrating GE and WR into basic services shows promise while the WASH interventions have been well-received by communities and DKs supported the needs of women especially. Looking forward, WLDS's demonstrated adaptive capacity and planned grants for livelihoods and protection services, and WASH facilities support, offer a viable path to improve outcomes under Pillar 2. The momentum gained in Y3, the project's trust and credibility, and mobilization of communities by partners, are also factors that position the project is well to strengthen its contribution to women's access to and control over gender-responsive services in the final phase. The endline evaluation should be able to assess evidence of impact across the full set of service domains across more locations and participants.

Impact ToC Pillar 3: Women's leadership and decision-making power in governance, peacebuilding, and development processes in Rakhine State.

Table 9: MTR rubrics rating for project impact under ToC Pillar 3

Rubric Rating	1 (Weak)
Criteria	The triangulated evidence base shows weak and/or negative signs of impact across the selected ToC Pillar. Data related to this theme is non-existent or minimal and/or lacks reliability, validity and credibility.
Explanation of assessment and key evidence	

There is minimal and dispersed localized signals of progress toward the intended outcomes under Pillar 3, however the triangulated analysis indicates that impact is not yet evident. While the WLDS project has demonstrated strong efforts and commitment, particularly in high-risk and restrictive contexts, the overall contribution to impact in this pillar is currently limited due to a lack of implementation of several activities and insufficient evidence to justify a higher score.

Triangulated findings from FGDs, KIIs, and project documentation reflect that **meaningful changes in women's leadership are most evident within project-created spaces of WASH groups, and changes amongst GLP and MC alumni** that support increased participation and decision making for women in the household and communities. WASH groups and the IWD/16 days of activism events provided valuable platforms for increasing women's participation, confidence, motivation, and semi-formal leadership roles. Some anecdotal accounts suggest women are increasingly active in community activities and informal decision-making, and that male support is growing. However, these are anecdotal, unevenly distributed, and not equivalent to consistent access to or decision-making power and influence of women across community nor higher levels of governance, peacebuilding, or development structures. The evaluation also recognizes that the project intentionally shifted the focus of Pillar 3 to decision making at the household and community levels. This is a more appropriate and feasible scope given the context. The majority of planned activities and supportive grant mechanisms for external women's groups, WROs, and CSOs (beyond the WLDS LPOs) have not yet been implemented and were hindered significantly by the intensity of conflict, civic space restrictions, and practical challenges, leading to a strategic scale-back of activities. The project also reframed peace to social cohesion.

The strength of evidence is also constrained by small qualitative sample, reliance on self-reported gains and unverifiable claims of influence, and lack of disaggregated or highly credible data on actual women's decision making and leadership outcomes. **Many examples focused on increased women's participation and gradual acceptance and support of women's roles in public and economic life. Sanctioned and widespread decision making and leadership within their communities remains pending.** Several FGD participants implicitly and explicitly expressed that women's participation, decision making and leadership roles remain contingent on male permission and that patriarchal norms continue to dominate Increased self-confidence and participation are important precursors to decision making power and leadership, but they do not yet demonstrate clear, sustained, or widespread shifts in power dynamics or gender equitable decision-making. Staff KIIs also generally acknowledge the limited impact under Pillar 3, especially in comparison with the project design and

envisioned changes. **Such changes would be unreasonable to expect at this point, given the relatively short timeframe of actual implementation, deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, the polycrisis context.**

There are commendable adaptive efforts and some promising early signals of indirect changes that can logically support 1300 outcomes, the current rubric score for WLDS contribution to impact is 1 (weak). This assessment reflects the lack of implementation and robust evidence to support stronger claims of change that can assigned at the impact level —not a shortfall in project commitment, necessary adaptations or strategic intent. While adaptation was necessary and appropriate, these combined factors have severely limited direct and plausible impacts for Pillar 3 overall.

Looking forward, if the WLDS consortium delivers on its planned support to other WROs/CSOs and continues to mainstream GE/WR awareness and knowledge across all interventions, and offers relevant opportunities appropriate for the operating context, **it is plausible that stronger and more measurable impacts on women's leadership and decision-making and related organizational capacities to sustain these efforts in the long-term will emerge**. Interventions, indicators and expectations for impact under Pillar 3 should be realistically targeted at a narrower scope for feasibility and to balance with the other high needs and priorities for basic services and resources interventions. It seems appropriate to continue focusing efforts on women's access and leadership in decision making spaces at community levels and working with motivated GLP and MC Alumni, rather than aiming at inter-community, State, and National levels. This is the same for improving social cohesion and communication across ethno-cultural groups, which can create more enabling conditions for peaceful development and governance. Accordingly, WLDS is seeking approval for a revised set of PMF outcomes, indicators and activities for 1300.

Concluding Remarks, Lessons and Recommendations

Concluding remarks

WLDS has contributed to early signs of impact across its three Theory of Change pillars, with varying degrees of progress and strength of evidence. Under Pillar 1, there is credible and consistent evidence of meaningful individual and relational change in gender norms and behaviours among direct participants, particularly through GLP and MC interventions, supported by strong self-reported transformations in confidence, attitudes, and actions. Pillar 2 shows promising, localized results in women's access to and leadership in gender-responsive WASH services, with evidence of increased skills, recognition, and inclusion through WASH group participation, although broader impact remains limited due to delays in other sector interventions and severe contextual constraints. Pillar 3 demonstrates growing participation and leadership of women in project-supported spaces and decision-making roles, particularly among GLP and WASH-trained women, but sustaining and expanding this progress will depend on addressing structural and social barriers, particularly the burden of unpaid care, economic conditions, and a need for stronger institutional support from capable civil society and community groups. Overall, the WLDS project has established a promising foundation for impact through its integrated feminist approach. There is clear potential to deepen and expand transformative change in the remainder of the project.

Difficult trade-offs and realistic forecasting are critical to streamline activities and focus on maximising potential for impact and sustainability in the remaining project period. The harsh realities of even more narrowing civic space; military occupation and the recent forced conscription law; a highly contentious governance context at national and Rakhine state-levels; and access and community engagement capacity differences between villages and camps as several WLDS camps faced closure and forced unjust migration of internally displaced people since the project started. WLDS partners remain highly committed to

addressing the many relevant community needs and priorities within the project's triple nexus approach as best as possible. Finalizing a feasible revised WP and PMF and taking action to advance ethical exit strategies during both implementation and close-out phase are key tasks for the consortium to ensure with the remaining project time and resources.

The impact that WLDS envisions and the disadvantaged communities of Rakhine rightly deserve, requires continued immediate and long-term support to sustain the gains achieved to date and expand GE and WR benefits. Meeting the overwhelming humanitarian and long-term needs for gender-responsive basic services, advancing gender equality, supporting women's empowerment to lead and make decisions, and protecting human rights, are beyond the means of one project or set of actors to address. These challenges represent a moral imperative to act, and call for shared responsibility for governments, donors and civil society to jointly meet their international assistance and human rights commitments and conventions. Sustained concerted efforts, as reflected by the WLDS triple nexus feminist approach, are needed to establish and embed social norms changes and enabling conditions for inclusive governance, peaceful co-existence, women's empowerment, and protecting the rights of diverse and marginalized communities in Rakhine State.

Lessons and Recommendations

1. The triple nexus approach is highly relevant and necessary in the WLDS context.

Evidence to date emphasized that WLDS design and integration of both development and humanitarian interventions, with more limited but tangible efforts for peace (due to the context), is both essential and well-received. This flexibility enabled the project to pivot in times of shocks and crisis escalation, such as response with DKs after Cyclone Mocha. The project planned to provide more services and resources (1200) in parallel to direct GE/WR interventions (1100); delays and procurement challenges did not allow for this. It is a significant need which threatens gains in GE/WR if not addressed as an urgent priority, especially WASH infrastructure and livelihoods support. The project is mobilized to implement 1200 interventions during the remainder of the project.

Recommendation: To reduce meeting, training and data-collection heavy activities. Integrate GE and WR awareness raising into 1200 interventions, with an emphasis on social cohesion and inter-group engagement within communities (1300). Established GLP, MC and WASH participants are key to engage with in these initiatives. Targeting and selection should intentionally focus on those who have shown strong motivation and capacity.

2. WASH interventions serve as an effective entry point for building community trust, partner credibility and buy-in for GE/WR/WE.

WASH interventions and establishing WASH groups have served an important entry point for gaining leaders' approval and support, fostering community buy-in for messaging and acceptance, and building trust the project and partners, while also addressing critical WASH needs. WASH remains a critical need, especially the infrastructure and maintenance, which has not been possible to implement at the scope planned. The WASH groups are the structures with the most project exposure to date and are perceived

to have the most potential to continue in the long-term given the overall communities' interest and need for WASH.

Recommendation: The assumption of WASH group continuation without support post-project should not be overestimated. A strategic focus on the sustainability of WASH groups with concrete actions by partners should commence well in advance of project closure to connect them with community structures and CSOs/CBOs as well as specific discussions about sustainability plans with WASH groups.

3. **Barriers to WASH infrastructure and maintenance plans and the current rainy season.**

The project has demonstrated continuous adaptation and strategic problem solving for project delivery, and to meet emergency needs in the evolving crisis, including its pivot to access additional GAC funding for DKs post-cyclone. However, the significant procurement and logistics barriers and additional request for an environmental assessment by GAC resulted in a gap between participatory needs assessments and on the ground support for additional WASH infrastructure and (the majority of) planned maintenance. The rainy season period will extend this gap further during a time that WASH needs will increase. This is a complex issue to resolve since procuring more items to deliver during the rainy season (beyond what is already procured for distribution in Y4 Q2) or accessing cash for emergency WASH needs are both seen as highly challenging and unlikely.

Recommendation: Given the challenges for procuring more materials or cash for WASH needs in time for distribution during the rainy season, it seems critical that the project mobilizes for immediate WASH infrastructure and maintenance as rainy weather conditions change across communities. Revisiting the WASH infrastructure/maintenance plan together with forecasting weather patterns and planning partner travel accordingly to phase the implementation by the type of WASH activities that are most feasible by location and weather conditions.

4. **Addressing requests for incentives for community participation and ensuring 'do no harm'.**

Several FGD participants and a couple of WLDS partner KIs raised requests for additional material incentives and/or cash for community participate in project activities. Some MCs also reported that their peers believed that they participated in the project because they are being paid, presenting a misunderstanding of project support. The project provided basic per diems for food and travel (cash or in kind) for training participants. However other material or cash incentives are not part of the project model due to conflict sensitivity and "do no harm" principles. One project action taken was that honorariums for MC/GLP alumni delivering sessions were discontinued in Year 4 after concerns of fairness were raised from WASH groups who do not receive these. The lack of material/cash incentives presents a risk of decreased priorities in GE/participation and sustainability of GE gains or more progress, as raised by several FGD participants. Incentive expectations remain a challenge, particularly when the full planned scope for service and resources (1200) was not possible to implement to date. Oxfam believes this challenge will be alleviated more when WLDS delivers more 1200 activities in Y4 and Y5 (e.g., grants, WASH infrastructure, IPE, etc.) and communities see the benefits of this support.

Recommendation: This is a complex and common challenge that Oxfam continuously grapples with in Rakhine and other crisis contexts. Community requests are understandable given their high economic and food security needs and the current humanitarian poly-crisis. WLDS has a commitment to do no harm and there are significant risks with providing incentives, beyond basic food/travel costs for specific

activities. Oxfam and LPOs have long-terms experiences and principles guiding decisions around incentives, while implementation of 1200 activities may ease this challenge. Providing more focused and accessible communication to communities (e.g., suited to literacy, culture and language diversities) about the rationales for not providing incentives is also advised - to increase understanding and reduce perceptions about payment to engage.

5. **Balancing high needs and coverage with feasibility and quality.**

The reality of significant cross-sector humanitarian and development needs amongst disadvantaged target communities in the Rakhine presents inevitable hard decisions on WLDS priorities and reach going forward. The operating conditions to date have demonstrated that it has been unfeasible to deliver all the activities as designed and it is unlikely that the conditions will ease, while other shocks are still possible, as seen by the Cyclone and escalating conflict. The project has adapted to deliver as much as possible and already reduced some activities in Y3. There are still a significant number of intensive activities planned for Y4 and Y5. For example, several different grant mechanisms (i.e., livelihoods, protection, CSO/WRO, care solutions) are planned, all which require the WLDS team to review, approve, deliver and oversee. These take a lot of effort to manage especially for community groups/participants without previous relevant experience, while organizational strengthening of additional CSOs/WROs is time and resource intensive when done properly.

Oxfam is aware of the need to balance plans feasibly and is in the process of revising the WP, PMF and budget for Y4&Y5. Yet, several interviews with WLDS staff suggest an unrealistic perception that more activities than delivered in Y1-Y3 combined can be delivered in the remaining 1.5 years – this also includes the close-out period and ensuring ethical exit strategies for sustainability. Partners' strong commitment and ambition for meeting community needs is clear and worthy, while these needs are highly relevant. However, attempting to deliver too many activities over such a short timeframe in this operating context threatens overall quality, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The project remains at risk of 'spreading itself too thin'.

Recommendation: Given the strong justification and supportive flexibility of the donor and OCA, the project revisions and streamlining of the WP, PMF and budget, should be guided by logic and feasibility, seriously considering previous WLDS implementation trends and challenges faced in access, logistics, and delivering activities. This requires avoiding exaggerated expectations and building in realistic time and effort for close-out activities and transition of established community structures to maximize sustainability and long-term benefits (also requiring concrete plans in action *before* the close-out phase).

Recommended options to consider include: reducing the amount of grants, perhaps by giving larger grants to fewer people/groups with the most potential; be especially cautious with the number of WROs/CSOs that Oxfam/IPs can responsibly support while also implementing several other activities; reduce community-based research and data collection exercises; reframe and revise the scope and immediate outcomes of ToC Pillar 3. See Annex C for detailed evaluator WP recommendations (June 13).

6. **Reframing peacebuilding, advocacy and governance approaches in context.**

The designed triple nexus approach and ToC includes peace and high-level advocacy and governance aspects. But the contextual conditions prevented the project to advance these significantly. The contextual conflict escalation and recent military conscription have made it even more difficult to program

directly about peace and governance. The team adapted the language, reduced certain activities, and took a more low-profile approach to peace, advocacy and governance. The associated activities and progress to date are framed from a lens of social cohesion and increased access to opportunities for communication between diverse ethno-cultural and language groups.

Recommendation: Continue strategic reframing of this third aspect of the nexus, and ToC pillar 3, and expectations. Reduce the scope of activities given the contextual realities. Revise immediate outcomes and indicators to focus them at women's and WRO/CSO leadership, decision making and advocacy at community levels and governance fora, including informal spaces, rather than at State and National levels. Identify other activities across pillars that provide opportunities for social cohesion and communication as contributing change pathways under 1300.

7. **Strong feminist leadership, collaboration and consultative partnership within the WLDS consortium.**

Oxfam has modeled a consultative, inclusive leadership approach with joint planning, regular consortium meetings, transparent budgeting, and collaborative decision-making. The different project governance structures (PMU, PAC, SC) enable both field and management participation. Partners' collaboration has helped create a culture of shared learning, transparency, and co-creation of program approaches in context. This reflects WLDS and Oxfam's commitment to feminist and de-colonized partnership approaches. There are trade-offs. Decision making and negotiation process for the continuous revisions and alignment of the many approaches of the project has been labour intensive while not all decisions can be effectively made by consensus.

Recommendation: Difficult decisions about revisions to project WP and activities are required and must be finalized in June and July to enable maximum implementation and quality in the remaining project period. The close-out phase requires dedicated time and actions to do ethically and responsibly. Recommended options to consider include:

- Keep the overall collaborative project governance model, while finding more balance between the amount of consultation in decision making and finalization of processes. Experience to date reflects that not all decisions are efficiently or effectively made through consensus and drawn-out consultation processes, despite the benefits and appreciation of a highly consultative approach.
- Define and communicate clearer boundaries about decisions Oxfam may need to take more quickly as the accountable and responsible project lead. For instance, in cases of widely differing opinions such as activity revisions and reductions, identified as a bottleneck area.
- Clarify areas where IPs should take more autonomous decisions on how to deliver approaches in the field, without Oxfam providing all the details beyond a framework that partners can each adapt and apply according to their capacities and target communities. A tension between reliance on Oxfam's leadership to guide everything and partner's confidence and autonomy in this regard was identified as a work in progress.
- Transparency about how and why decisions are made remain key to maintain the positive collaborative culture fostered within the consortium to date.

8. **Effectiveness of remote and virtual organizational capacity strengthening.**

The distance between different field-based locations of WLDS staff and mobility and security conditions required less in-person meetings and training activities within the consortium on key project approaches and cross-learning. While an efficient and necessary modality for reaching and including all required staff, the poor internet and inconsistent electricity created issues for comprehensive engagement and comprehension in some cases. Internet based approaches do not fully replace the effectiveness of in-person training and hands-on technical support, especially for content that is newer or more complex. Partners expressed that organizational capacity development provided by Oxfam has been useful, impactful and appreciated and partners have also learned from each other from sharing experiences. There are still areas identified strengthen and expand as the project move to new activities and approaches. A few KIs also requested more field-based presence of Oxfam staff to provide training and follow-up support (i.e., stationing technical advisors in partner sites for longer periods).

Recommendation: There are practical and budgetary barriers to enabling frequent in-person capacity development amongst all consortium members. Virtual sessions will likely remain the most feasible option in many cases. These can effective, depending on the length, complexity and quality of the content. Consortium consultations during the revision period should ensure to:

- Consolidate the top key priorities for organizational strengthening for the remainder of WLDS based on the CAT4GO assessments, keeping the number of prioritized areas manageable.
- Decide on the optimal approach for phasing, combining and delivering training sessions.
- Identify which ones are best suited for virtual delivery and those deemed as most essential to deliver in-person.
- Identify specifically who can provide follow-up and when for scheduling purpose, since some Oxfam advisors are shared beyond the WLDS project.
- Closely consider how and when WLDS partners will provide institutional strengthening effectively to the WROs/CSOs that will receive grants, given many of the same barriers will likely apply for delivering trainings and mentorship.

9. **Attrition and dropouts have been higher than anticipated at the PIP stage due to worsening conditions in Rakhine State**.

Forced camp closures, recent military conscription laws, migration due to crises, are reported to have a high impact on project participants figures. The exact numbers are unknown and WLDS is in the process of determining reasonable estimates. For example, for Oxfam and YCT, 4 camps in each area (8 total) were closed; all residents were forced to leave these areas. These previous participants will not continue in the remainder of the project. Some FGD participants also raised the struggle to prioritize GE/WR in the face of worsening food security and livelihoods, despite their motivation to engage. While out of the project's control, higher than average attrition rates have implications for reach, activities, assessment, and comparisons between baseline and endline.

Recommendation: Determine attrition rates by project locations to date as accurately as possible and consider this figure closely in revisions to activities and participant targeting by location and for revising targets for Y4, Y5 and the PMF. Keep track of dropouts throughout the project. Identify and list participants who have been engaged in the project since the onset for sampling and the endline

evaluation. Calibrate endline comparisons to the baseline values considering the changes to participants and reach.

10. **WLDS staff participation in data preparation and collection for the MTR provided a useful opportunity to strengthen MEAL skills. The review of primary qualitative data collected for the MTR and monitoring data (PDMs, pre-post trainings, etc.) reflect that qualitative data validity, reliability and consistency has improved since the baseline, and specific insights about quality and feasibility.**

Conducting MEAL in the Rakhine context is highly challenging and requires creative 'good enough' approaches rather than aims for perfection. Future project MEAL should be selective about the frequency and methods of data collection by staff during implementation. Gathering community perceptions is very important for feedback, learning and advocacy, also offering capacity development opportunities for project staff. Yet too much data and inaccurate data cleaning/analysis reduces data utility overall; it increases risks of errors, misinterpretation, and places burden on community and staff. External consultants face practical limitations in what they can credibly use and process with existing or translated data based on its accuracy and quality.

Recommendations:

- Prioritize quality of data over quantity. Keep in mind the large effort required and errors along the data pathway from the point of data collection, translation and notes, and data cleaning after translation (as found in both the baseline and MTR experiences).
- Plans for Oxfam's shared technical staff to compile and analyze WLDS data and write briefs should be made with caution according to their actual time available for WLDS.
- Reduce the number of written briefs and data collection tasks planned during implementation. For example, the listening exercises under 1300 can add value, but may not be as of an essential priority given the time requirements by communities and staff to do them versus the benefit. Plan for fewer listening exercises and/or consider integrating these into the endline evaluation.
- Revise and streamline the PMF indicators and targets for feasibility and in accounting for the dropouts due to forced camp closures and migrations: see Annex D for PMF revision recommendations June 15.
- Align the endline evaluation with tools and methods applied in the MTR as much as possible. Use the same or similar formats for the qualitative tools and refer to qualitative training materials provided during the MTR, and apply the developed rubrics for themes of relevance, efficiency, impact, etc. at the endline stage. This will help avoid duplication of effort, increase consistency, comparisons, and enable a more efficient process for the endline design and methods.

11. **Emerging but unverified differences in acceptance, engagement and progress of social norm change between diverse community groups (e.g., variables of age, village vs camp settings, and religion/conservatism**).

Observations by staff and the MTR qualitative data suggests that youth are more receptive to GE/WR/WE message, and social norm change, and elders (especially males) expressed more resistance, implicitly or explicitly. More challenges for buy-in and project tailoring of materials was required to engage more

conservative and religious communities (Muslim and Chin). The village and camps settings also differ in terms of project access, leadership support and capacities of residents. These factors have implications for the depth and pace of change amongst diverse groups. However, the MTR sample is not fully representative; sample participants were likely selected based on being the most accessible, engaged and receptive; and staff observations are more anecdotal than conclusive. Exploring these variables more concretely is useful for future programming design and implementation.

Recommendation: The WLDS project team could develop a simple shared tool to input their ongoing observations and examples related to the differences cited above (without requiring more heavy data collection). The endline evaluation methodology and tools should be designed to examine and triangulate these emergent but unverified findings more deeply. If possible, gather a wider more representative sample of community members and include observational data about group dynamics and social change. Analyze trends against variables of age, village and camp locations, and specific ethno-cultural groups (i.e. more religious/conservative groups).

12. **"Hard things are hard" - managing expectations and timeframes for sustained impact.**

The ToC design via a feminist triple nexus approach is found to be relevant for the needs of communities. But long-term commitment to and application by WLDS partners, other supportive actors on the ground and donors to address humanitarian needs while also advancing development and peaceful co-existence in parallel is required to increase, embed and sustain positive social norms and enabling conditions (basic needs, livelihoods, etc.). This essential yet uphill battle is well understood by Oxfam and WLDS partners who work and live in Rakhine's tense and fragile operating context.

Recommendation: In addition to revisions to the WP and PMF for feasibility and quality, it is important to manage expectations for widespread impact across the ToC. Sustaining investment in WLDS partnerships and communities beyond the project and advocating for more support with institutional actors and donors remains critical. This has become even more challenging since WLDS started, due to changes to the international landscape of decreasing aid and development funding, and regressive policies for GE, human rights, feminist and inclusive governance and development by some global north governments. Oxfam and WLDS partners represent an important group of actors who remain committed to these causes. Much longer-term commitments, investment, advocacy and institutional support from the international community and donors such as GAC are essential to sustain and grow impact during (and beyond) WLDS in the face of increasing threats to human rights, GE, and inequitable economic and governance systems.

13. **Justification for a No-Cost Extension and the associated risks of ending the project too soon.**

Given all the barriers out of the project's control and the demonstrated momentum that has been achieved in Year 3, an NCE is justified for many reasons, as discussed and evidenced throughout the report. It will allow the project to implement its planned interventions (at a reduced scope) and deliver on its commitments with the communities who have given their trust and time to engage in the project. Failing to do so has consequences for the trust of communities and reputations for partners who have persevered to work on WLDS in such challenging circumstances. It may also threaten the gains in GE and WR if communities perceive their expectations were not fulfilled. Continuing to meet critical basic human needs in one of the most disadvantaged and underserved contexts while advancing women's empowerment and

GE seems a justified rationale considering the cost would not increase. It is also critical that the project has enough time following implementation for an ethical close-out phase that will maximize potential for long-term benefits and sustainability.

It is extremely challenging to conduct an evaluation and final reporting while also implementing several activities, and places undue burden and risk on staff and communities, as previous experience demonstrates. Granting an NCE demonstrates good faith on Canada's commitment to the Rohingya people – i.e., The Government of Canada's strategy to respond to the Rohingya and Myanmar crises from 2018-2024, during which WLDS was approved and began. While the timeframe for this strategy may have officially ended, the crisis and inhumane conditions for the people of Myanmar are far from over. Allowing the project to deliver as much as possible with the allocated funding is in the spirit of the statement that "Canada stands in solidarity with the people of Myanmar and their desire for a peaceful, inclusive and democratic society."[10] Doing so would reflect that the Canadian Government is still a champion of feminist international assistance and the protection of human rights in a global context in which other large donors and governments are regressing on their previous commitments, moral imperatives and responsibilities as advantaged international community members.

Recommendation: It is strongly recommended that the project request a No-cost Extension (NCE) and that GAC revises its previous decision and approves an NCE request. It is advised that the NCE extends the implementation phase to March 2027 with an additional 6-month period (April to September 2027) for close-out during which the endline evaluation, due diligence and final reporting can be completed to the quality and feminist-MEAL standards and act as useful resources going forward.

Annexes

Annexes listed below were provided in separate files and saved on the WLDS MTR Box folder.

Annex A: Reference List (External Sources)
Annex B: MTR Data Analysis Plan and Final KII and FGD Sample
Annex C: Evaluator WP revision recommendations (June 13)
Annex D: Evaluator PMF revision recommendations (June 15)

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[10] See "Canada's response to the Rohingya and Myanmar crises" at https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/response_conflict-reponse_conflits/crisis-crises/myanmar.aspx?lang=eng