Calculating Programme Reach in Oxfam

Guidance Note

(last update 27/08/19)

This guidance note covers why it is important to make accurate estimates of the number of people we have reached in our interventions and how these can be more accurately reflected in our reports. It provides some guidance that teams need to be aware of in their planning and areas to remain alert to during implementation. It points to the value of teams working together to establish overall coverage targets that are being set at the design stage as teams seek to maximise efficiency and coherence, the importance that targets are realistic and clear in proposals and MEAL frameworks and that interventions which overlap are identified and highlighted. The guidance note is not intended, in isolation, to guide teams on how ongoing calculation of our reach relates to our accountability to communities or monitoring intended / unintended outcomes.

Why does Oxfam need to calculate our programme reach?

In both humanitarian and longer term programming, Oxfam is required to report to donors (both institutional and the public) on how many people have participated in/benefited from our interventions. While it is recognised that reporting the numbers of people does not give an indication of the quality of the interventions, it is central to how we represent scale and coverage. The numbers of people, will, more often than not, be estimates. EFSVL responses where people are registered are a good example of the exception to this, although beyond the registration of the direct individual recipients, we still often estimate a larger number of people benefiting within the households. However, we can make better estimates by using a consistent approach to calculating reach across all Oxfam affiliates.

Five Key Principles for Calculating Programme Reach

1. An individual should only be counted once, no matter how many interventions they benefit from.

   If a person is counted more than once, this is referred to as “double counting” and this should be avoided as it distorts reporting.

2. Potential areas for counting individuals more than once during the development of targets are identified, and the field staff responsible for reporting figures avoid double counting.

   For example, a WASH team decides to target a community of 2,000 people for a borehole and the EFSVL team decides to target 500 people in the same community for cash. Knowing that the EFSVL programme will not reach the total population but the WASH programme will, we know that the programme reach will only ever be a maximum of 2,000 people (the total population of the community). The figures for each intervention should still be recorded for monitoring and evaluation purposes, but never added together.
3. We report the number of individuals reached, not households.
We often operate at a household level. However, an average household size can be used to calculate the total number of people reached. We are also required to disaggregate data by gender, age and disability. In any reporting, the source used to calculate the average (e.g. a census, the local water authority etc) should be stated in a footnote.

4. We report numbers of people involved in interventions that have taken place in the reporting period.
For example, recipients of a cash distribution should be counted only when they receive the cash, not when they are first registered.

5. If there is uncertainty about overlapping figures, we simply report the highest figure.
There may be times when there is confusion about overall figures e.g. between WASH and EFSVL. In this event, report the larger figure, e.g. if we have 1,000 people for WASH and 500 for EFSVL, report a total reach of 1,000. This may result in under-reporting, but it will be a safe figure to use until more reliable figures can be calculated. Any major changes in data between reports (particularly if data have been found that count people more than once) should be explained with a footnote.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DIRECT AND INDIRECT REACH
Direct reach covers the people for whom the project is being undertaken, are usually regularly engaged in the project interventions, and directly receive a product or service.
Examples could include: people in a displaced person camp accessing clean water; people receiving cash grants, or communities where boreholes are drilled. In some instances, the direct reach will cover whole households rather than just the individual who directly participates (e.g. cash for work, hygiene kits), as the purpose of these interventions is to reach households through one individual.

Programmes targeting animal health – although you need to know, for example the number of animals vaccinated for reporting, for reach figure is the number of owners. These can be recorded during vaccination sessions.
Nomadic communities or pastoralists who have access to services over a period of time are included in the direct reach calculation although they may be hard to count. They should only be counted once, not every time they return to use the facilities.
Partners - If the programme is about capacity building of partners, the direct reach figure is the partner staff. It is not recommended to estimate indirect people who may eventually benefit from the capacity building programme.
Villages – if working with a whole community in a village, the reach is the number of people in the villages not the number of villages.

Indirect reach calculates people living within the catchment area of an intervention who can obtain a benefit, but have not had direct contact with an Oxfam intervention.
As a general rule, we do not calculate indirect reach. However, if in a response where there are large numbers of people who are engaging indirectly with our work (e.g. a PHP radio broadcast that reaches a large catchment area) and the programme team realistically believes that it is important to represent this work, the reporting of this indirect reach should be kept separate to the direct reach figures to avoid confusion.

CALCULATING REACH IN CAMPAIGNS PROGRAMMES
It is usually impossible to estimate with any degree of reliability the number of people targeted in a relatively short humanitarian campaign unless it is for a very specific group of people such as the inhabitants of a particular camp, or an ethnic minority, where the total number is known and where
the campaign is aiming to assist all members of the group. In these cases, the targeted population of the campaign will be the direct reach figure. Keep in mind that if the targeted population is receiving other Oxfam services, we must ensure that we don’t double count them.

DOUBLE COUNTING SUMMED UP
There is a difference between reporting the number of individuals reached, and the number of interventions implemented. Oxfam situation reports primarily need to report the number of individuals reached.

Calculating Reach: Each individual is recorded only once, no matter how many interventions they benefit from. For example, a person in a camp receives water from a borehole drilled by Oxfam, participates in a cash for work activity, and participates in a hygiene education session. While they have received benefits from three interventions, they are still only one person and should only be counted once.

The problem with “double counting”: The individual outlined above will be recorded by PHE, EFSVL and PHP programmes in their monitoring. Unless the technical teams each mention what other work has happened in the same area, or the person calculating the total reach is aware of this, the numbers will be added together which will distort the reality of the numbers of people Oxfam is actually reaching. It also distorts the number of people apparently affected. If a village of 200 people gets two interventions, suddenly the number of beneficiaries is actually double the size of the village.

HOW TO CALCULATE PROGRAMME REACH
Calculating reach in camps: Camps are the easiest situation in which to calculate our programme reach. If there are 2,000 people in the camp, and Oxfam is the only organisation providing water, then all 2,000 people are counted in our total reach. If Oxfam is the only organisation digging latrines, then again, the total population equals total reach. As such, the total reach will always be the population of the camp, no matter how many services individuals receive. Keep in mind that this figure isn’t necessarily the number of people using the service, but those in the catchment area who are the potential users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY EXAMPLESTAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAMP 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population: 2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="2,000" alt="Water Interventions" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="2,000" alt="Cash for Work" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="2,000" alt="Sanitation Interventions" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Country Examplestan
There are 3 camps in Examplestan where Oxfam is working, providing a mixture of water, sanitation, hygiene, and cash. The population of each camp is known. In Camp 1, every person in the camp is
being reached with water, hygiene and sanitation. So the total reach number is 2,000. In Camp 2, a proportion of the population is receiving hygiene and cash, but the whole population is reached with water. So the total reach is 5,000. In Camp 3, water isn’t being provided but sanitation and hygiene is covering the whole population. Therefore again, the population of the camp is the total reach (10,000). To determine the total programme reach for the Country Examplestan, the totals for each camp (2,000+5,000+10,000) can be added. 17,000 is the total reach figure that should be reported.

Calculating reach outside of camps: This can be more difficult than camps where the total population may be getting the benefits of a WASH intervention but only some selected households are receiving, for example, an EFSVL intervention. In this case, it is very important to have clear targets, or in the absence of targets, a clear understanding of what and where services are being delivered. Where more than one Oxfam team is working in the same area reaching the same population with different services, each team should record the number of people they are servicing. However for reporting, the total reach number for OI will be the population of the area (as the whole community has received WASH services), not the combination of each team’s work.

EXISTING, NEW AND CUMULATIVE REACH
The reporting of existing and new reach figures allows us to track the progress and growth of a response. A camp setting makes this easier, as the growth in the camp population will align with the growth in Oxfam reach. For example, if we are reporting on a weekly basis, and the total population of the camp last week was 2,000 and this week it’s 2,500, then in our next report we have 2,000 people listed as our existing reach, and 500 people in our new reach. The cumulative total will be the total of new and existing reach figures, in this case 2,500. In determining the cumulative total, a date should be chosen (the start of the programme if a new response, or the start of the scale-up in a slow onset) to ensure consistent reporting. Where camp populations are fluid, with people departing and arriving regularly, the cumulative number should, where possible, include the increase of new arrivals over time. The cumulative number will never decrease (as even if people leave a camp, they have still benefitted from our services). Remember, this will never be an exact science, and if there aren’t precise figures available, you can add a footnote to explain how you’ve calculated the reach.

FORMATS FOR COLLECTING INDIVIDUAL AND INTERVENTION NUMBERS
A number of data collection formats have been developed to collect the data for programme reach, which can be adapted for different responses (see Compass for examples). When filled out by technical staff, they should be made aware that it is important to record any overlaps they are aware of. For example, if the PHE knows that both PHP and EFSVL interventions have occurred in the same place as a drilled borehole, the PHE should mention this on the reporting sheet. Similarly, if the PHP and EFSVL also mention this, the person calculating the total will know to only use the largest figure, and double counting of individuals will be avoided. Good communication between teams and the use of this guidance during inductions will help to avoid overlaps.

AGE, GENDER, AND DISABILITY DISAGGREGATED DATA
Oxfam is required to report our reach disaggregated by age, gender, and disability. During an in-depth assessment at the start of a response, as per the Minimum Standards, the average household size, gender ratios, and rates of disability should be identified. The disaggregation may be based on estimates by the community, or in very difficult circumstances, by using the breakdowns listed in the last census. Remember to identify the source from where the data has come and to verify and update data as the programme monitoring system is put in place.

USING SPHERE STANDARDS
In previous guidance on calculating reach, the use of SPHERE standards was advised to calculate the number of people — **this is no longer recommended**. In a camp situation, we may not be reaching the SPHERE minimum standard’s indicators, e.g. 50 people may be using each latrine in the early construction phase, rather than the maximum of 20. So, in this case, if we have constructed 100 latrines, the reach should be 5,000 people and not 2,000 (as it would be if we were using the SPHERE standard). If the latrines dug are the only safe sanitation option for the camp population, then the total population should be counted as sanitation beneficiaries. Note that this is not an endorsement that it’s acceptable not to reach SPHERE standards, and the progress against the SPHERE standards as an element of programme **quality** should still be reported by the technical teams. Technical teams will use SPHERE to calculate the amount of hardware needed for a programme, which will be based on good estimates of the overall population. Often population figures can be provided by other agencies (MSF, IOM, WFP etc). It is important not to use SPHERE ‘the wrong way round’ i.e. to extrapolate population numbers e.g. from the example above, to state that the population is 2,000 people.

**A CAVEAT TO INCLUDE IN REPORTING**

Numbers alone do not give an indication of the quality of a response. As such, the following caveat (adapted as necessary) should be included under any programme reach table in situation reports: “Our programme reach provides only a rough indicator of Oxfam’s impact. As people often benefit from more than one intervention, it is never possible to be certain that they have not been counted more than once. In addition, a person might receive something as small as a bucket of hygiene items, or as large as a rehabilitated community water source.”

**Note:**

*When working through partners, it might be a good idea to contextualise (for example a programme that does not fall within WASH, EFSVL or Protection core competencies) and translate this document with examples of good practice. It is also necessary to explain why it is important to calculate reach and some training might be needed. Ensure that the partner budget also includes resources for MEAL.*

**In summary:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimating reach at project/programme design</th>
<th>Calculating reach during implementation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When:</strong> at the beginning of the intervention to include in concept notes and proposals</td>
<td>Two key elements:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is the <strong>benchmark</strong> against which we measure coverage (actual people reached as compared to planned). It is used at the end of the project/programme to determine to what extent we have reached the 10% or 25% figure of the total population affected, i.e. whether we have reached the Oxfam standard</td>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong>, consistently applied throughout the intervention and explained to all staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cumulative number is used for this benchmark</td>
<td><strong>Monitoring tools</strong> (registers, activity monitoring sheets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make sure usage is consistent and accurate and feeds into reporting and decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four strands:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. By individual activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. By technical sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Total number reach for the period reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Cumulative reach over the whole period of the intervention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>