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***Title:* Why work 'at home'? Oxfam's value-added and the UK Poverty Programme**

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Abstract

International development NGOs are in existential crisis. Their legitimacy and added value are increasingly challenged. While scholars have focussed on legitimacy, work on 'value-added' is scarce. In particular, no research addresses the value of domestic programmes to INGOs. This paper rectifies this, focussing on the case of Oxfam GB's UK Poverty Programme (UKPP).

Using empirical research from 35 interviews with Oxfam GB staff, partners and beneficiaries and over 150 archive documents, the paper identifies seven assets through which the programme provides value added to OGB. It highlights the possibility that these could offer insights into the dimensions of future INGOs.

Key words: INGOs, domestic programmes, value-added, legitimacy, future.

Why work 'at home'? Oxfam's value-added and the UK Poverty Programme

Introduction

In the last few years, large development NGOs headquartered in the global North have been going through an existential crisis. Questions about their future viability and contribution to development have come from scholars, civil society networks and the media. In 2015, for example, BOND's paper, *Fast Forward* (2015), argues that in order for the UK's development NGOs to be 'fit for purpose' in an era of rapid demographic shifts, climate change and changing planetary boundaries, they need to re-invent themselves. The challenge more recently has been conceptualised as how to respond to disruptive change (Gnärig 2015). Drawing parallels with the case of Kodak's inability to react and innovate in the face of digital technologies, Gnarig throws down the gauntlet to civil society to re-think their work and create innovative adaptation strategies or else suffer the same fate as Kodak. A Guardian journalist asks the question more bluntly: "Do International NGOs still have the right to exist?" (Doane 2016).

In response to these challenges, considered in more detail below, ideas are emerging about new approaches International NGOs (INGOs) can take: disintermediation, innovation, agile structures, and less linear more complex systems thinking. Suggestions that INGOs should 'bring it home' by entering domestic political debates and building links with local communities and supporters are particularly pertinent to this paper (Roche and Hewett 2013; Green 2015). However, to-date there has been no empirical research to map or explore on the work of INGO domestic programmes. The possibility of this process being mediated via INGO domestic programmes has not yet been fully recognised in the academic literature.

This paper takes up the idea of how the domestic programmes of INGOs can offer a range of potential 'assets' for the future of these organisations, contributing towards their adaptation strategies. It uses empirical research on Oxfam GB's (OGB) UK Poverty Programme (UKPP) undertaken 2009 – 2014,

in which data was collected from 35 semi-structured interviews with OGB staff, partners (including five civil society partners in Orissa, India) and beneficiaries and from over 150 OGB archive documents and grey literature. The research was driven by the question as to why and with what implications INGOs establish domestic programmes. Oxfam GB was chosen as the main case study. Mindful of the vulnerability of case studies to external validity weakness, three further case study INGOs were selected: Islamic Relief UK, Oxfam America, Save the Children Denmark. These played an important falsification role and rather than subjecting data to positivist truth claims, enabled the researcher to look for awkward cases. The researcher had not worked for any of the case study INGOs, although had previously worked in the INGO sector. Data collection was undertaken informed by an epistemology, which explicitly privileges the knowledge and understanding of the people working in INGOs. An analytical framework was developed using Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu 1977), working with the concept of organisational habitus with its constituent dispositions. This was the basis of the AtlasTi coding structure for a thematic analysis of the raw data, providing the evidence-base for this paper. (1)

Much of the scholarly debate, and indeed practitioner anxiety, is situated in critiques of the legitimacy of INGOs: the first area of enquiry the paper addresses. It then moves to the contested and problematic concept of 'value-added', considering why and how the pressure for INGOs to demonstrate this has emerged over the past few decades. The third section provides background to Oxfam GB's domestic programme, recognising that this is an area of research in need of greater scholarly attention. Using evidence from the empirical research, the paper sets out the range of seven dispositions or 'assets' that these domestic programmes appear to offer. Final conclusions suggest the potential relevance of these assets, especially at this time of current soul-searching in the sector, to INGOs seeking to adapt or transform in the face of a rapidly changing external environment. The paper concludes with empirically grounded suggestions as to what an INGO future might look like.

INGO legitimacy

There have been warnings since the early-1990s of the impending crisis of legitimacy for INGOs, as the global context in which they work changes and challenges them to reconsider their future role and mode of operation (Yanacopulos 2016). The extent to which these warnings have remained consistent, despite changing contexts, over the last two decades is illustrated by the following sets of recommendations and visions for the future of NGOs and INGOs.

> *The power of NGOs in the third –value driven –sector will depend to an important degree on their ability to form coalitions across ethnic, class, spiritual, geographical and national boundaries.* (Fowler 1991, 16)

> *A dramatically changing world requires ICSOs [International Civil Society Organisations] to fundamentally rethink all aspects of their work. ICSOs' future relevance and legitimacy will be determined by their willingness and ability to embrace and drive change.* (Gnärig 2015, 14)

Legitimacy can be distinguished from credibility with the latter as the capacity for an NGO to be believed and a prerequisite of legitimacy. Both require active maintenance by an NGO. There is a rich literature of recommendations for INGOs on how to organise their future work to overcome legitimacy deficits and the related existential crisis. Critical perspectives range from that of organisational theory in which INGO learning is examined (Kontinen 2018) to Post-Development approaches in which INGOs are encouraged to situate themselves in frames of social justice and global solidarity, beyond development (Schöneberg 2016). Legitimacy maintenance strategies reflect the heterogeneity of the sector and can include: visible commitment to 'costly effort' (Gourevitch and Lake 2012, 22), such as reforming and transforming governance structures over many years as in the case of ACORD (Fowler 2012); engaging meaningfully with 'grassroots' communities (Pallas, Gethings and Harris 2015), and acquiring expertise and knowledge (Thrandardottir 2016). In addition, more general NGO legitimacy strategies, including those to be pursued by local grassroots NGOs, include joining a network (Appe 2016)

and improving impact (Jakimow 2012). INGO legitimacy research tends towards a binary in which it is either considered from the perspective of top-down international norms or from that of the Global South (Walton et al. 2016). This paper attempts to offer a different perspective. It situates the existential crisis of INGOs in the search for sustainable transformatory development practice, which distances itself from colonial binaries and representations. Consideration and analysis of legitimacy through the lens of INGO domestic programming will be a significant addition to this literature.

Value-added?

Although the concept and practices of INGO legitimacy and legitimising have been subject to considerable scholarly scrutiny, far less attention has been paid to the concept and legitimising strategy of 'value-added'. This is surprising given the frequency with which the term is used by INGO practitioners and donors. Here, the paper attempts to redress this, considering why and how the pressure for INGOs to demonstrate 'value-added' has emerged over the past few decades and providing evidence of its usage by practitioners.

Much of the literature citing the 'value-added' term explicitly offers no exploration of its genealogy in the context of INGOs. A brief analysis reveals the origin of term in the sectors of manufacturing, marketing and accounting (for example, Moore 1979). In the context of INGOs in development this is problematic. Firstly, there are questions as to whether civil society should adopt business practices because they are unsuited to tackling issues of social injustice and inequality. Secondly, there is evidence that the 'audit culture' inherent in results-based evaluation practices is detrimental to learning in aid agencies (Scott 2016). The growth of the use of social audits in the corporate and NGO sectors is one explanation of the increasing concern with value-added.

Its use in the context of INGOs can be traced to two thematic debates. Firstly, the need for INGOs to prove their worth is partly a result of donor government pressure for demonstrable value from each intermediary part of the

development funding 'system'. Thus, while working in 'partnership' with donors, southern NGOs, governments and the private sector, INGOs also have to demonstrate their comparative advantage over them to justify funding. Secondly, a 'value-added' strategy within INGOs is characterised by an anxiety to be seen to respond to changes in the external policy environment and demonstrate innovation. This contributes towards a propensity to programmatic trends and 'heightened self-criticism' (Nederveen Pieterse 2010, 89). This paper uses the concept of 'value added' aware of its potential to reduce development to a technical process but led by the frequency of its use throughout the research data.

Within the Oxfam GB case study, the concept of 'added value' is present throughout the data, particularly from existing Oxfam GB staff and internal archive documents from the 1990s (*see Figure 1*). Its use and presence suggests an environment in which multiple actors are competing for funding and visibility, accountability is an important requirement, and there is anxiety about Oxfam GB's future role in the development process. Due to the notable frequency with which this term was encountered in the research data, the concept of 'value added' became an analytical code within this empirical research.

Figure 1. Oxfam GB references to 'value-added'

An Oxfam International report on the domestic programmes of six Oxfam affiliates identifies six areas of 'added value' (Burrows 2003). (2) These include: providing a truly global analysis and understanding of the causes of poverty and injustice; providing legitimacy, which is lacking without a view of poverty and injustice in their own society, and that domestic programmes can support constituency and image building. This paper asks the same question in 2018 – what is the value-added that domestic programmes provide for INGOs now? It is important to ask this question again for three reasons. Firstly, that as aid flows change, INGOs may no longer have the choice as to whether to stay within their comfort zone (working within the international development paradigm) or whether to move towards alternatives and adopt

the 'global civil society' paradigm (Edwards 2009, 45). Secondly, since the global financial crisis in 2007-8, scholars and INGOs have paid more attention to imagining and planning for a future in a changing global environment, possibly without ODA (Green 2015). However, there are no empirical studies, which delineate the elements or assets of a future INGO from the perspective of domestic programmes or indeed consider these programmes as one of the range of 'alternative' futures for INGOs. Finally, as Oxfam GB restructures much of its operations towards its 'One Oxfam' vision, the value of the UKPP is again open to scrutiny (at the time of writing), while Islamic Relief has consolidated its domestic programme, employing a permanent UK Programme Coordinator in 2016, and Oxfam America are openly opposing the new US administration's executive orders on immigration.

Oxfam GB's domestic programme

Evidence from the OGB archive indicates that debates about the possibility of working strategically with poor communities in the UK began in 1972. Proposals were made to the Director for a combined initiative with other UK-based agencies to lobby at party conferences to emphasise the indivisibility of poverty, whether in the UK or beyond. The resulting formation of the 'Group of Six' agencies eventually led to a meeting with the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, in May 1974. The meeting considered a series of proposals, which sought to align the work of the British government on poverty in Britain and the 'Third world'. In 1976, the Oxfam Director asked a Trustee to prepare a report addressing the question 'Should Oxfam respond systematically to poverty at home?' Trustees decided that there should be no change of policy but that 'no doors should be slammed'.

The internal debate about working in the UK was marked by the widely differing and frequently oppositional perspectives of staff and volunteers. It was only after a further five rounds of consultation (begun in February1984, July 1984, 1985, 1989 and 1992) that a UKPP was finally established. The process in 1989, instigated by Director, Frank Judd, resulted in recommendations to appoint a UK Grants Officer, develop a fully-fledged programme and establish a UK Grants Committee to oversee the work. Two

factors are thought to have prevented implementation: a Charity Commission inquiry into OGB and an organisational review, which led to considerable re-structuring in 1993. (3)

When David Bryer became Director in 1992, he made expansion of work in the UK one of his priorities. He drove the process through to a final decision of the Council to establish the UK Poverty Programme (UKPP) in May 1995. This decision was all the more remarkable given considerable negative press coverage and staff opposition expressed at the 1994 Oxfam Assembly. (4) (5)

The programme was set up with a contribution of £200,000 from general funds. By 2010 the UKPP had a total staff of 37 people working across England, Scotland and Wales, with each country working to its own operating plan. The programming scope of the UKPP in 2010 extended across the themes of a decent living, respect for people living in poverty and gender and race equality. Its focus was on capitalising on OGB's place as domestic arm of international organisation as a unique selling point, enabling it to bring experience and perspectives from its international poverty alleviation and community development work to bear on similar issues in the UK. Spending on the UKPP is not disaggregated in any Oxfam GB annual reports but total programme expenditure from 2006 to 2013 is estimated at £8.9 million (International Aid Transparency Initiative 2014).

Having provided some background as to the formation and scope of OGB's UK Poverty Programme, the paper now moves on to considering the dimensions of the programme's 'value-added' for OGB.

Domestic programme dispositions or "assets"
Data from the OGB case study highlights the close association between the concept of 'added value' and OGB's UK Poverty programme formation. Here the paper examines data from UKPP through this lens and identifies seven dimensions, which can be considered as a range of assets. The term "assets" is used here to refer to the dispositions of a new habitus, which constitutes a possible future organisational identity in response to the existential crisis of

INGOs. Each of these assets is worthy of more research but our purpose here is to situate them in the questions around INGO added value, rather than advocate for them.

Intellectual consistency

The staff of INGOs are frequently required to articulate what it is that their agency does and what makes it distinctive. This may be with institutional donors, the media, peers in other development NGOs and with groups of volunteers or scholars. This activity can be a function of their fundraising, marketing or policy work but any perceived or actual inconsistencies in the way their work is articulated can be very uncomfortable for NGOs. It is notable that a meeting of large INGOs at which senior staff reflected on the need for internal changes highlights inconsistency between perception and reality as an area of concern. Ten perceived strengths of large INGOs were identified and juxtaposed with references to literature drawing attention to where reality has fallen short of the perceived strength (Shutt 2009, 16). Inconsistency can make NGOs vulnerable to accusations of straying from their stated values or insufficient transparency and accountability.

This need for consistency emerges as a theme throughout the data for this study. It is highlighted by stakeholders and partners in India in the early debates on the UKPP as a vital element in maintaining the credibility of OGB in the eyes of its southern partners who wanted to see OGB taking the 'same risk' as they did, working with the complexities and political dynamics of local communities and national and local government. One of the reasons for the UKPP being established was that there was an intellectual mismatch between talking about poverty as global and then not recognising it occurred in the UK. Analysis within Oxfam GB just after the programme was established supports this, arguing that the UK Poverty Programme was identified as an opportunity for a more creative approach to poverty as a global issue.

A graphic illustration of how inconsistency of approach in different parts of the world is seen to impact on people living in poverty is given by one of the UKPP partner beneficiaries.

> *If you lived up a mountain in Kurdistan and have no water you would be a victim of poverty. If you're living in Northwest England and that happens to you, you're a bad person*. (UKPP beneficiary)

In the context of gendered behaviours within the trade union movement, OGB emphasised the need 'to do the change you want to see' (UKPP partner). Its insistence on this principle had, in the eyes of the partner, significantly enhanced Oxfam's reputation and credibility for consistency between practice and theory. *The demonstration of intellectual consistency is, therefore, a key asset for Oxfam GB.*

Relationship between theory and practice
An extension of intellectual consistency is an ability to demonstrate the interplay between theory and practice. This research observes in the UKPP a conscious effort for its practice to engage directly with theory, specifically about the nature of development. This is best illustrated in its testing of the application of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) in a range of different contexts in the UK, throwing up varied challenges for practice at each stage.

The UKPP started using SLA in Thornaby and Stockton on Tees, partnering Church Action on Poverty (CAP), to research the assets of 24 low-income households. Oxfam and CAP employees undertook the research, which concluded that the approach can uncover the reality of life for people experiencing poverty, the strategies they used to get by on a daily basis, and the opportunities they had to move towards a more sustainable future. But it also threw up the challenge of 'what next?' for these households, prompting Oxfam GB to work with a local partner to address issues such as the high interest rates charged on household goods by the company, Buy As You View.

In Cardiff, the SLA tool was used by researchers from community organisations within two very different urban communities: one predominantly white working class and the other largely Asian. The findings illustrated 'the link between poverty, unmanageable debt and mental ill health' and made

recommendations to policy makers. It also demanded 'some pay back into the community. Somehow this information has got to find a way back, it's got to do something' (UKPP partner). This sense of 'what next?' for the community led to the development of a board game, which became a visual representation of the research findings and helped people identify strategies for 'making ends meet' and solutions for their households and communities. (6)

Similar research into livelihood strategies in London and the Peak District by two different Oxfam GB partners stretched the application of SLA further, drawing out issues such as: the training of peer researchers; the use of research findings to create a better understanding of poverty among service-providers, practitioners and policy-makers, and SLA as a tool for getting busy farmers to talk about their lives, looking beyond the everyday struggle. *The ability to demonstrate and make visible the relationship between theory and practice is, therefore, an asset of the UKPP.*

Making visible a theory of poverty as powerlessness
Evidence suggests that the changes prescribed for INGOs in maintaining their legitimacy are difficult to implement without the funding of a supportive and engaged public who understand the work of the INGO and its context. Conceptions of what poverty is and what causes it are part of this understanding. Both public and staff understandings of poverty present challenges for changing NGOs. In Australian NGO advocacy, for example, *internal* NGO tensions are grounded in two different views of poverty: caused by endogenous factors and exploitative power relations (Rugendyke and Ollif 2007, 30). An ability to demonstrate the non-economic dimensions of poverty can create understandings among INGO constituencies that will provide them with the support they need in advocating for long-term structural change. Fundamentally, INGOs need to decide which story they want to tell (Edwards 2017). However, their ability to communicate about the relationship between poverty and power is bound by the political context in which they work. Although clearly the relationship between poverty and powerlessness is relevant to all INGO work regardless of location, the contention here is that

the UKPP enables Oxfam GB to make the relationship *visible* to its supporters, volunteers and donors.

The need to re-shape internal and public conceptions of poverty was recognised by Oxfam GB organising the Assembly in 1994, which began by asking 'what is poverty and what are its causes?'. OGB's theory of poverty as powerlessness has been remarkably stable for the past three decades. A programme in West Orissa, India includes the analysis 'Poverty… is social, economic and structural (Political) powerlessness'. This aligns closely with OGB's later policy positions. The UKPP makes its theory of poverty as powerlessness visible in action and is able to demonstrate this approach much more clearly than Oxfam GB can do in a developing country context, as issues of resilience, power and opportunity are not hidden or overwhelmed by the issue of basic needs (OGB staff).

The non-economic dimensions of poverty and its relationship with powerlessness are the focus of most UKPP partner work. This is made explicit in work with partners using Community Organising principles. This is not the place for a detailed analysis of this phenomenon, which has become prominent in the UK particularly with the successes of the London Living-Wage campaign. UK partners, such as Thrive of Thornaby, who used community organising techniques, made the identification of where power lies the first step in any campaign. Exclusion from decision-making is highlighted in the work of UKPP partner, Church Action on Poverty, in participatory budgeting in Manchester, Salford and Birmingham. The centrality of dignity and voice to work with people experiencing poverty is vividly brought to life by ATD Fourth World's programme *The Roles We Play*, which explores identities beyond their poverty such as human rights activist, poet and campaigner. *The UKPP's ability to illustrate how poverty and powerlessness are connected is a significant asset to OGB.*

Highlighting the complexity and realities of living in poverty
Having determined why telling a story of poverty as powerlessness is of strategic value to Oxfam GB, the paper now turns to consider the fourth value-

added asset of the UKPP, which looks at how this story emerges in the words of UKPP staff, partners and beneficiaries. An analysis of the data coded for OGB's theory of poverty identified five sub-themes. One emerged more strongly from the interview and corporate, rather than OGB archive documents: the theme of the complex lives and realities of those living in poverty. The skills and agency required to juggle and manage these lives were explicitly celebrated by UKPP stakeholders.

For example, one of the distinctive features of sustainable livelihoods research with households is the level of detailed information gained about the complexity of people's lives and their coping capacities and strategies. The SLA process enabled people living in poverty to reflect on how they managed their everyday lives and to draw a sense of achievement from this. People were able to identify strategies that worked and consider how these might be used to move from 'coping' to the next stages of 'adapting' and 'accumulating'. This emphasis on the capabilities of people living in poverty, including their inventiveness and resilience in the face of the most adverse circumstances demonstrates the significance of agency and dignity in overcoming poverty.

The need to assert the dignity of those living in poverty is seen as a response to the demonization of the poor in the UK and a common feeling among communities living in poverty that nobody cares. In addition, the dominant role of the state in adding to the complexity of people's lives makes the assertion of individual agency more significant. The state's power is manifested through a range of devices such as children being taken into care, farm subsidies, the minimum wage and national insurance numbers.

By *highlighting the complexity and realities of living in poverty* and the coping strategies required to manage these, the UKPP enables Oxfam GB to distance itself from approaches to poverty that demonise the poor and strip them of agency. It also grounds OGB itself in the experience of its own society, enhancing its legitimacy.

Neo-colonial distancing

INGOs are criticised for their reproduction and perpetuation of neo-colonial power structures between the global north and south. They are also vulnerable to accusations of neo-colonialism because of unequal relations with SNGO partners (Elbers and Schulpen 2013). A notable theme which emerges from this resrach data is the way in which Oxfam GB has used the UKPP to distance itself from these criticisms. Oxfam's history is articulated ironically as 'white men in shorts out there doing stuff' (OGB staff), capturing vividly the organisation's self-consciousness about its roots.

The need to respond to criticisms of Oxfam GB as an organisation going into other countries and imposing solutions without addressing poverty 'at home', was cited as one of the reasons for the UKPP establishment. Two tipping points in the UKPP process appear to be crucial. The first was the impact of Stan Thekaekara's intervention at the Oxfam Assembly when he challenged Oxfam's perception of itself and the world, seeing poverty as an issue 'out there'. Stan worked with tribal communities in south India and had been brought to the UK in 1994 to look at community work in the UK (Thekaekara 2000). His experience visiting the Easterhouse Estate in Glasgow, seeing the impact poverty had on people was the same as that in India, helped change the terms of the debate. The second key moment was at the Council meeting in April 1995 at which the UKPP proposal was considered, when a Trustee said 'if we don't do this…we're going to be promoting an us and them view of the world' (OGB staff).

Oxfam partners in the UK count this neo-colonial distancing as an asset for the UKPP including questioning the relevance of the term 'Third World' and preferring the term 'Fourth World' as a place of social exclusion. Partners comment on the double standards in some approaches to development work in the UK and overseas and link this with the attitudes of colonialism. The evidence from this study suggests that Oxfam's *UKPP* marks an attempt *to graduate from its colonial identity - an asset in responding to accusations of paternalistic and colonial approaches to development.*

Civic rootedness

The issue of civic rootedness can be analysed as a UKPP asset which provides added value to OGB at two levels. Firstly, rootedness provides credibility for international advocacy, grounding an INGO in the experiences of its own society. Secondly, it requires, while also contributing to, a transformed relationship with the public. Both demand investment from the organisation (Gourevitch and Lake 2012). This section summarises the considerable data emerging on both themes in this research

The study illustrates how the UKPP provides Oxfam GB with moral credibility in its international advocacy work, ensuring it is grounded in experience and providing it with confidence in talking about poverty. A Policy Department report recommends that Oxfam GB's advocacy around macro issues needs to be more robustly rooted in micro-level experience, echoing critiques of INGO's legitimacy and advocacy. This is supported by other research which argues that becoming more closely involved with work in their own societies will enhance INGO credibility in advocacy work and their sense of purpose, identity and existential legitimacy (Banks, Hulme and Edwards 2015).

Engaging with the public around the ideas of development and a 'good society' is a potential route to a contemporary 'alternative' development. However, engaging with firmly entrenched understandings of poverty among the UK public is acknowledged to be vital yet problematic (Darnton and Kirk 2011). The data in this study depicts UKPP work as a lonely process of transforming and challenging existing behaviour and understandings. A central aspect of the work of any development NGO is seen as offering new perspectives and "changing the terms of the debate" (OGB staff). A transformed relationship with the UK public also entails acknowledgement that the categories of donor, supporter, partner and beneficiary by which contact-management approaches identify stakeholders become nuanced and blurred. (7) Campaign supporters may, for example, also be people living in poverty. This is not the way in which OGB have traditionally thought about the UK public, who have generally been instrumentalised as donors or campaign supporters.

The process of transforming a relationship with the public is at work in Oxfam's *Something for Nothing*, for example, challenging stereotypes of people living in poverty. OGB also suggests the need for transformations in the behaviour of its supporters: find out more, raise awareness, lobby for change, and change the way you live. It is easy to dismiss these exhortations as standard devices in the INGO campaigning toolkit, but they can also be interpreted as the first steps to realising a different 'domain' and understanding of development in which the locus of change required is in the global North rather than South. *The civic-rootedness of UKPP, with the potential to transform OGB's relations with the UK public, is a vital value-added asset for OGB.*

A development ethic in which everyone matters

The UKPP models a programmatic focus on inequalities through which an ethic in which 'everyone matters' is operationalized and 'othering' minimised. This approach extends across vertical and horizontal inequalities, manifested both globally and locally and interconnected. The vertical inequalities between individuals in the UK and beyond have received attention due to their effects on the health, education and work prospects of individuals and the wellbeing of societies as a whole (Picketty 2014). The effects of horizontal inequalities are shown to have relevance to countries in the global North and South and at a global level in the case of inequalities experienced by Muslims (Stewart 2009). The UKPP's focus on inequalities is grounded in the organisation's theory of poverty, which, as noted earlier, is related to powerlessness. It is an approach that fundamentally rejects absolute notions of poverty and in which powerlessness is a key driver regardless of social, economic and political contexts. An activist from India observed when visiting a housing estate in Gloucester that although the physical manifestations of poverty were completely different to India, the impact was the same (Thekaekara 2000, 560).

Vertical inequalities are made visible and addressed by UKPP work with people living with debt. This highlights the multiple inequalities that can make up a life in 'poverty' – whether income, educational opportunities, housing, access to financial services or powerlessness in the face of corporate interests. These inequalities have a clear association with dignity: one focus of UKPP work is to provide platforms for people in poverty to speak about themselves with dignity. The interconnections between the vertical inequalities with which Peak District hill farmers live and the global political economy are vividly illustrated by the UKPP research which investigated farming lives using the SLA, connecting their livelihoods with EU legislation and global food security.

Work to address the horizontal inequalities experienced by specific groups, such as low-paid women, black and minority ethnic (BME) women, migrant workers, also exposes the processes through which people become powerless. This includes combatting gendered attitudes to work by UNISON Scotland, while also campaigning with the union for fair pay. The inequalities in access to education, financial advice, support and decision-making experienced by BME women are the focus of the *Routes of Solidarity* project and research exploring the financial lives of BME mothers. Fundamentally, each of these areas of work assert powerfully that everyone matters, focussing on groups of people who have generally been vilified in the popular media, to maintain their equitable access to rights and dignity. So, for example, the UKPP undertook research on the exploitation of migrant labour following the death in 2004 of 23 cockle pickers from China in Morecombe Bay, as part of a three-year Big Lottery grant.

The examples cited above provide empirical evidence of the way in which the UKPP operationalizes an ethic of 'everyone matters' through its focus on inequalities. In addition, *this enables us to conclude that the seventh asset of the UKPP is that it demonstrates an ethic that everyone matters*.

The above discussion of the seven dispositions or assets of the UKPP provides empirical evidence of how OGB's domestic programme can add

value for the whole INGO. In addition, it offers a potential lens with which to consider the constituent elements of a future INGO and the attendant risks. The above value-added assets reveal the extent to which work in the UKPP exposes OGB to 'the same risk' as its southern partners, involving it in the day-to-day tensions, trade-offs and debates of domestic politics. Although this is fundamental to OGB's theory of poverty, it moves development work beyond the popular conception of 'poverty alleviation' and OGB's 'international development' identity. The issue here is not whether INGOs can be engaged in political activity, for example as charities registered in England and Wales. Rather, the UKPP *reveals* the essentially political nature of development to the UK supporters of OGB and beyond, or OGB's 'sleight of hand'. A UKPP partner explains how the nature of work done overseas is often invisible to donors in the UK, with the implication that similar work in the UK is more visible, revealing its political nature.

> *…people have been happy to fund and support Oxfam in the UK, on the basis of, 'There's terrible things happening abroad - we'll give you lots of money. Go away and fix them.' And what Oxfam does is then go away and do a variety of things, some of which is disaster-relief, but huge amounts of which are actually very radical - very radical, politically radical interventions.*

Conclusions

The aim in this paper has been to provide empirical evidence of the value-added that Oxfam's UK Poverty Programme (UKPP) provides to Oxfam GB as an INGO under pressure to demonstrate its legitimacy. We have identified seven assets of the programme or dispositions of habitus. Three of these are fundamentally located in OGB's theory of poverty, visibly asserting its relationship with powerlessness, the agency of the poor and moving it beyond an 'othering' approach in which the poor are always distant and 'over there'. Two of the assets project a particular image of OGB as an organisation keen to respond to scholarly and practitioner critiques of INGOs as inconsistent and unable to translate changing theoretical conceptions of development into practice. The two assets, which relate to civic rootedness and an-'everyone matters' development ethic, appear to reflect the need for a new and transformed narrative around development with the public in the UK. They also respond to new ways of thinking about global-local spaces in which, for

example, the SDGs posit a universalist approach to poverty alleviation. The possibility of these processes being mediated via INGO domestic programmes has not yet been fully recognised in the academic literature.

As dimensions of legitimacy of OGB, these value added assets can also offer a way of thinking about the future of INGOs. This is clearly an area of potential further research, which could consider the extent to which these assets form the basis for what an INGO might look like. There is also further work to be done on considering the role of INGO domestic programmes and whether domestic programmes beyond the cases addressed here, offer the same legitimating assets. Extending the work of organizational legitimacy theory into INGO domestic programming also offers potentially rich insights, especially in making use of legitimacy typologies in empirical research.

Notes

1. Documents from the Oxfam GB archive were accessed between April 2010 and April 2011. They include internal memos and reports from 1972 to 2010. These are now held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford University with cataloguing still in progress as of March 2017. The grey literature used includes published material about the UKPP by Oxfam GB and its partners: ATD Fourth World, Church Action on Poverty, Peak District Rural Deprivation Forum and UNISON. The author is happy to be contacted for details of archive material used for this paper.
2. The six affiliates were: Oxfam America, Oxfam Canada, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad (Australia), Oxfam GB, Oxfam Hong Kong and NOVIB Oxfam Netherlands.
3. In 1990 the Charity Commissioners started their investigation into Oxfam's campaign calling for sanctions against apartheid South Africa. The inquiry concluded that there was evidence that some OGB campaigns were political rather than charitable.
4. For example, The Daily Mail (3 September 1994) carried an article entitled 'Stick to the Third World 'insulting' Oxfam told'. The Mail on Sunday (4 September) and Daily Telegraph (5 September) also published very critical pieces.
5. The Oxfam Assembly was a group of 250 OGB stakeholders, which met for the first time 19-21 September 1994.
6. Ruth McElroy, University of Glamorgan, explained in an email to me (18 August 2014) that they worked with a games designer on a prototype game, which was then used in the focus group user workshops and the process filmed.
7. Contact-management or 'customer relations management' software systems, such as Raiser's Edge or open source CiviCRM, are used by the INGO sector to manage their contact and donor relationships.

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