

# Introducing Oxfam

John Gwynn



*Oxfam (United Kingdom and Ireland) is a private and independent non-governmental organisation. This book gives a brief introduction to our many different functions, our objectives, and our ways of working with people in long-term development and disaster-relief programmes around the world.*

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# Introducing Oxfam

Oxfam's main objectives are: 'To relieve poverty, distress and suffering in any part of the world ... and in connection therewith to educate the public [of the UK and Ireland] concerning the nature, causes and effects thereof'.

Oxfam believes in the essential dignity of people in poor communities and their capacity to overcome the problems and pressures which threaten to crush or exploit them. These may arise from climate and geography, from war or conflict, or from the complex areas of economics, politics, and social conditions.

Oxfam is a partnership of people who share these beliefs — men and women who, regardless of race, sex, or politics, work together for the basic human rights of food, shelter, and reasonable conditions of life.

## Development

Oxfam is committed to a process of development by peaceful means. This development will often be pursued through local organisations and small groups whom Oxfam calls its partners. Whether working through partners or directly, Oxfam hopes to achieve constructive change which allows people more fulfilling lives, upholds their dignity, encourages their self-determination, and acknowledges their cultural styles and priorities.

Such development should also take full account of environmental factors. It should be sustainable by preserving or improving the environment. It should not improve life at the expense of future generations.

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## **Witness**

Oxfam has learnt that one of the ways it can help people is by reporting to its supporters and the wider public on the position of those in need as it has found it, the causes of their poverty, and the obstacles it has encountered in its work on their behalf.

Always in the context of this experience Oxfam recognises its responsibility to influence, where appropriate, the organisations (both national and international) that affect the relationships between rich and poor countries.

*Ecuador: Pimbaro village school,  
Simiatug.*

JULIO ETCHART/OXFAM



## Brief history

**1942 Oxfam founded** — A group of people in Oxford in the UK met to see if they could help starving civilians in Greece during World War Two. They called themselves ‘The Oxford Committee for Famine Relief’.

**1945 War ended** — Many people in Europe were hungry and homeless, and many were refugees. The Committee collected clothes and money and sent them to agencies working on the spot. Working through local groups, rather than running our own programmes, has been our main way of operating since then.

**1948 First shop opened** — The first big national appeal raised £96,692 worth of clothing and goods. The first shop opened in Broad Street, Oxford. It is still there.

**1949 New aim** — The Committee decided to continue, and added a new aim: ‘the relief of suffering arising out of war or any other cause in any part of the world’.

**1950-59 Help for refugees** — Local groups were formed in the UK, and when 1959-60 was declared World Refugee Year, contributed over £755,000 to the worldwide effort to resettle displaced people.

**1950s Natural disasters** — We also responded to natural disasters such as drought in Bihar in India, earthquakes, and even flooding in the UK. Ever since then we have made occasional grants to emergencies in the UK.

**1960s Oxfam becomes a development agency** — We decided to support long-term development work instead of just giving relief to hungry, sick, or homeless people. We wanted to work with people to attack the causes of poverty, hunger, and disease. In 1961-62 we were helping over 400 projects in more than 50 countries.

**1961 First field staff** — Oxfam’s first permanent overseas

*Greek girl, in the early 1940s. Oxfam began as a pressure group, trying to help the people of Greece, during World War Two.*



representative was appointed to look after projects in Southern and Eastern Africa. By the end of the 1960s there were 11 Field Directors around the world.

**1962 'Oxfam'** — The shortened name 'Oxfam', which had been widely used since the 1950s, was officially adopted.

**1965 Strong support in UK** — 20 regional staff across the UK strengthened our fundraising and helped to set up over 400 Oxfam groups. Volunteer-run gift shops multiplied, selling goods donated by the public. There were 200 by 1970.

**1965 Oxfam Trading set up** — Our fair trading company, Oxfam Activities Limited (which included Oxfam Trading), was set up to import handicrafts from producers in poorer countries and pay them fair prices for their goods.

**1970s Education work in the UK and Ireland** — There was a growing understanding in the UK and Ireland that hunger, poverty, and disease are not simple problems. Rich and poor countries depend on each other, contributing to each other's welfare or harm. To widen the discussion, we increased our education work, and in 1974 we decided to spend up to 5 per cent of our income on education and information in the UK and Ireland. Our Education Department has ever since provided materials for use in schools, and support for teachers. Our Public Affairs Unit (now the Public Policy Department) was set up in 1974 to research and publicise particular causes of poverty in more depth.

**1974 Wastesaver started** — Wastesaver, a waste recycling centre in Huddersfield, experimented by recycling various items, but now concentrates on recycling textiles and aluminium, mainly collected from our shops.

**1970s New units** — We set up three specialised Units: Emergencies, Technical, and Health, to help in disasters and advise on longer-term work. As a result of experiences gained in disasters in the early 1980s, we developed a water-supply kit, well-drilling and water-testing kits, an emergency sanitation unit, and feeding kits, which are all ready for use at any time in emergencies around the world.

**1980s Work in the UK and Ireland** — We expanded our work in the UK and Ireland by increasing the number and improving the quality of our shops to increase our income. The Campaigns Unit was established to involve people in the 'Hungry for Change' campaign, which was launched in 1984. Volunteer campaigning groups were set up to inform the public about the effects on poor people of the international debt problem, and unfair aid and trade policies.

**1980s Wider issues** — Oxfam began to produce many well-

researched publications to encourage people to discuss development issues in more depth. In 1984-85 we mounted our biggest-ever emergency operation, with over £23 million going to relief programmes for famine victims in Ethiopia and refugees and local people in Sudan.

**1985 GADU set up** — We set up our Gender and Development Unit in 1985 to ensure that women's needs and issues are fully incorporated into development programmes supported by Oxfam.

**1988 Arid Lands Unit** — The Arid Lands Unit was set up to exchange information and ideas across sub-Saharan Africa. The Unit also examines environmental issues as they affect poor people – a growing concern worldwide.

**1990s** — In 1992 we raised £73.3 million and allocated £43.4 million to around 2,900 projects in over 70 countries around the world.



*The first Oxfam shop in Broad Street, Oxford.*



## Structure and legal status

*'I have always identified with the idea of Oxfam as a bridge of people – that we as an institution are only a link between people of good will in the North and South.'*

DAVID BRYER,  
DIRECTOR OF OXFAM.

Oxfam is a voluntary agency governed by a Council of Trustees, currently numbering about 40. The Trustees, who are all unpaid volunteers, are responsible in law for everything Oxfam does. They are based in the UK and Ireland, and usually serve for three or six years.

Volunteers are very important for Oxfam. Some 30,000 volunteers work for us in the UK and Ireland. There are also many thousands of volunteers connected with the development programmes that we support around the world.

In 1991 we employed 958 staff in the UK and Ireland, of whom 495 were working at the Headquarters in Oxford. We also have 12 Area Offices, whose work in education, fundraising, and campaigning work is also supported by hundreds of volunteers.

Another 682 staff worked in Country and Regional Office around the world. Most senior posts are now advertised worldwide. Increasingly we recruit local people to fill them. Staff working in Country and Regional Offices need to be familiar with local needs and development issues. They meet and discuss issues with partners and potential partner groups who may require funding, advice, or opportunities for them to meet other groups who are tackling similar problems.

### Charity status

We are a registered 'charity' under UK law, which forbids charities from taking part in partisan political activity. But we are allowed to make representations to Members of the national and European Parliaments about the obstacles we encounter in our work 'to relieve poverty, distress and suffering' worldwide. Our supporters also ask the government to bring about changes in

policies which will benefit the poor, such as increases in the quantity and quality of aid and fairer terms of trade internationally for poorer countries.

Being registered as a charity brings tax advantages. Under UK law Oxfam can reclaim tax paid by certain types of donors, and is excused from paying tax for some services. This brings an additional £5-6 million of income per year!

### **Profile of a Trustee**

Economist Kate Kirkland could have had a career making lots of money for herself. Instead she has balanced her working life between a part-time career and giving 16 hours of her week to working with us. She is one of Oxfam's volunteer Trustees and is the new Chairperson of the Trustee Committee looking after our Public Affairs, Campaigns and Education programme.

'At first I just thought of myself as working for a good cause', she says. 'Now I see us wanting to build solidarity with people in the South. I would like to see a much more equal distribution of the world's resources and want my country to change its policies to that end, realising that it will mean a drop in our own material wealth.'

Kate's own decision not to pursue greater material wealth was reinforced when, as a volunteer shopleader in one of the 890 Oxfam Shops, she went on a 'Knowledge of Oxfam' course and began to look at the effect of unfair debt and trade policies on people in poor communities in the South. She became involved in campaigning work and continues to work as a volunteer. 'This cause is too important, and I don't need money that much,' she says.

She feels many other people in the UK and Ireland would use more of their time in a similar way if they did not have to work full-time. 'A great benefit from being a volunteer,' she says, 'is meeting other volunteers from many backgrounds. I learn so much from them.'



JAMES HAWKINS / OXFAM

*'I would like to see a much more equal distribution of the world's resources, ... realising that it will mean a drop in our own material wealth.'*

KATE KIRKLAND

# How Oxfam works around the world

*In 1961 the first Field Office was opened in Southern Africa.*

Oxfam's work around the world takes place against widely different social, political and economic backgrounds. So, although people may share similar problems — the lack of health care, education, and rights to land; a deteriorating environment — their solutions to these problems are many and varied. Where Oxfam can help is by supporting communities' own initiatives. Above all, Oxfam believes in people, and in working 'at the grassroots'. Long experience shows that development projects work best when they come out of people's own needs as they identify them, and are designed and run by them. So we do not usually set up projects ourselves, but fund the work of local agencies and groups, working alongside them as partners, supporting them with funds and, where appropriate, advice. Sometimes the most effective help we can give is to put them in touch with other groups, enabling them to set up networks and associations that give them a stronger voice in challenging the causes of their poverty, where appropriate. Sometimes we support them by bearing witness to their experience and helping them bring their needs to international attention. How do we decide what to fund? Oxfam has only small amounts of money to spend in relation to the size of the problems, so the funding must be carefully planned as a coherent programme in each country, not just a series of unrelated projects. Building up a programme depends on the answers to a series of questions: who are the poorest and most marginal groups of people? What causes their poverty? What are they doing to build better lives for themselves? How can Oxfam support this process?

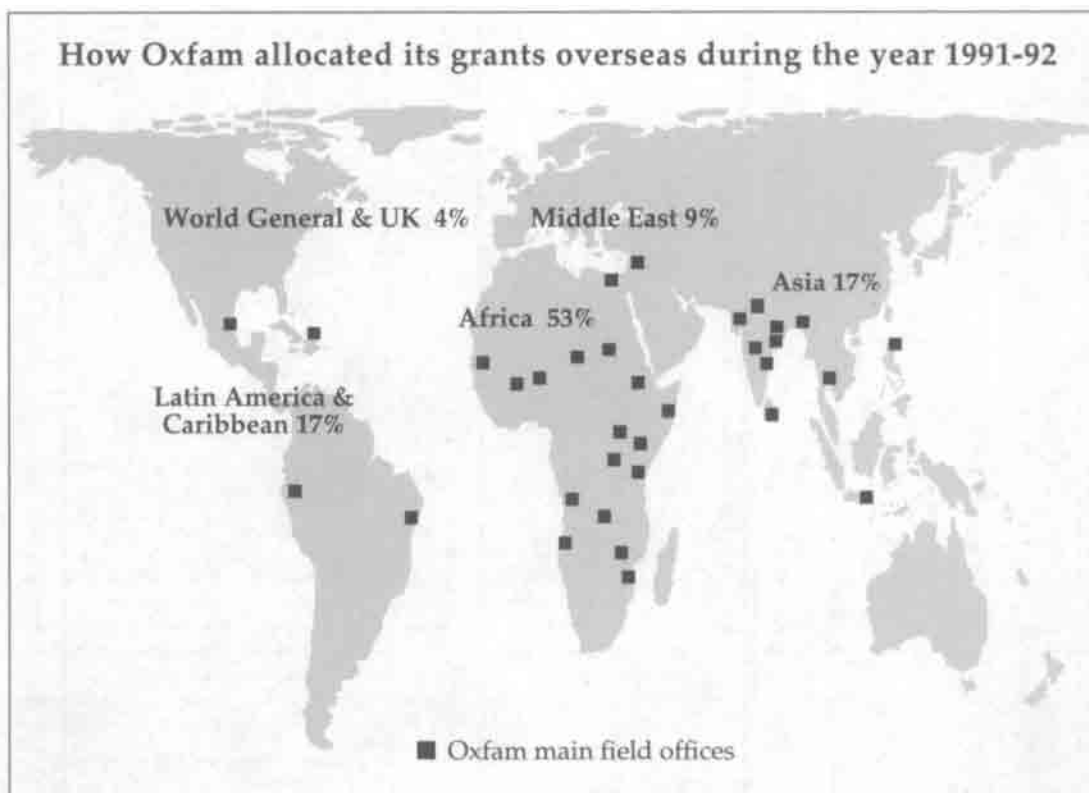
## **The grant-making process**

Oxfam's partners may be farmers' associations, women's groups, co-operatives, community organisations, or specialist agencies

providing services to poor people. The grant-making process usually begins with an application from a group to a Country Office, although sometimes a group may request funding at the planning stage of a project during a visit by an Oxfam staff member. The local Country Representative or the Project or Programme Officers always visit the group, to assess how best we can help. The knowledge that the staff gain from other projects is often relevant, and they can pass on useful information to the group.

According to the size of the project and the amount of funding requested, the decision to fund is taken either in the local office, or (for very large amounts) by the Regional Manager in Oxford, with a recommendation from the local office. A project will often need funding for more than a year. During the time a project is funded, it will be supported through regular visits by staff from the Country Office. When our funding stops, there is an evaluation to consider how the project's aims have been met. The hope is that the group will have become strong enough to continue their activities independently, perhaps drawing on other sources of help available, such as grants from their own government.

*In 1991-92 we allocated 13 per cent of our total funds to social organisation schemes, 9 per cent to education projects, 15 per cent to agriculture, 8 per cent to health, 3 per cent to production and income-generation projects, and 39 per cent to emergencies.*



*In 1991-92 Oxfam allocated  
£43.4 million to 2,900 groups  
in over 70 countries  
worldwide.*

*Half the grants were under  
£4,000.*

## **The types of work that Oxfam supports**

Oxfam supports a wide variety of groups who are working in areas such as health, education, agriculture, production, disability, income generation, social organisation, women's issues, unemployment, landlessness, or environmental concerns. We support organisations which have developed from local people's ideas, are run by local people, and reach the poorest and most disadvantaged in that community. Below are some examples of the kind of groups we support.

We have learnt that creating equal opportunities for women is essential. As Eugenia Piza-Lopez, Coordinator of our Gender and Development Unit, says, 'The key to what we are doing is that women's work is invisible to the eyes of their husbands, communities, and development agencies. Oxfam's role is to make that work and contribution visible.'

Our aim is to enable groups to become self-sufficient in their development journey. As the situation changes, in particular countries and in the world as a whole, we must retain the flexibility to respond to new challenges and to new definitions of the root causes of poverty by developing fresh approaches to the opportunities that occur.

*Working in the fields, Zambia.  
Women grow 80 per cent of food in  
sub-Saharan Africa.*

CHRIS JOHNSON/OXFAM

## **Women farmers in Zambia**

Without support from traditional or governmental structures the women of Zambia feed, care for and educate their children in the



face of rising malnutrition and widespread poverty.

Tisuake Zulu, a mother of six, has worked for most of her life in the fields, where women like her produce about 80 per cent of the country's food. Her husband is away looking for work and 'as a woman I can't be given a loan'.

Tisuake joined an Oxfam-supported women's agricultural project. The group of 16 women have a communal field of hybrid maize that needs chemical fertiliser and they work in each other's fields, sharing the burden of the agricultural work. But their hard work has not proved enough. Ever-rising prices of fertiliser, seeds and pesticides, compounded by drought and reliance on a few cash crops, mean that the women cannot feed their families all year round. The project members met to discuss their problems. They came to realise that relying on expensive chemical fertilisers not only caught them in a credit trap, but also destroyed the soil. They decided to grow alternative cash crops like groundnuts, beans and vegetables, and reduce the maize grown for home consumption. The results have been outstanding. 'This year I have no hunger in my house,' Tisuake says.

### **Land rights in Bangladesh**

Land is the single most important asset in Bangladesh, where the vast majority of the population rely on farming for a living. But between 60 and 75 per cent of people are landless, and are open to exploitation by wealthier farmers, for whom they work as day

*Samata meeting, Bangladesh.*

TANVIR/OXFAM



*In 1991 Oxfam employed 682 staff working in our 50 Country and Regional Offices around the world.*

labourers for below the minimum wage. Poverty and insecurity are endemic.

In 1983 the government tried to improve the situation of landless people. The law now decrees that all 'khas' (government-owned, untitled) land should be distributed among landless people and that a legal minimum wage should be introduced for agricultural labourers. Despite this, attempts to redistribute the land more fairly have always met with strong opposition from the landed classes. Most poor families still don't know that they have a legal right to the land. Oxfam is helping local people gain access to 'khas' land by funding local groups like Samata — an organisation of landless men and women who live by the Ganges. Over the last eight years, Samata have pressed claims to hundreds of acres of land. Their success has incensed powerful local elites, who have responded with harassment and intimidation. But with over 400 groups of landless people now affiliated to it, Samata is becoming a force to be reckoned with.

### **Refugee resettlement in El Salvador**

Over a million people were uprooted during the civil war in El Salvador, which ended recently. Oxfam supported a community of 8,000 refugees from the war who took shelter in neighbouring Honduras in 1981. Confined to a camp, they set up workshops, making their own clothes, shoes, and furniture. 'Even though our being in the camp was a tragedy, we learned many new things,' says Rafaela, a health worker. 'To read and write, to understand health and nutrition. And we learned to work together.' They built a strong, self-reliant community, but with the war coming to an end, they wanted to return to El Salvador. 'We wanted to contribute to the peace process and continue developing our country.' When they went back they renamed their old village Ciudad Segundo Montes, after a priest murdered by the Salvadorean military. They took over a coffee-processing plant, to be run co-operatively, and have set up a bank to fund development projects that offer alternatives to subsistence farming.

*At school on the West Bank.*

LIZ CLAYTON/OXFAM



### **Kindergartens on the West Bank**

Most of the 400 kindergartens on the West Bank are housed in poorly-maintained, rented buildings. With no professional training, many teachers are regarded as little more than 'babysitters'. In 1985, the Early Childhood Resources Centre (ECRC) began a teacher-training programme as part of its support for the kindergartens. Around 100 teachers now complete the course each year, and the training has a strong child-centred approach, encouraging children to develop initiative and solve problems through imaginative play activities. A number of new kindergartens have been set up,

equipped with educational toys, games and materials produced in ECRC's workshops. Oxfam has provided funds for the purchase of land, and for salaries, classroom furniture, and equipment. ECRC aims to help poor children in rural areas or refugee camps, and the new kindergartens have places for over 300 children.

## **Responding to emergencies**

All too often, the long-term improvements that people are bringing to their lives are undone by factors beyond their control. Floods, earthquakes, and other more directly man-made disasters such as conflict or economic collapse, can wreak havoc on communities made vulnerable by poverty. When emergencies happen, our Country and Regional Offices can release funds quickly to support the work of local groups, strengthening their capacity to help people survive and get them back on their feet. Almost half of overseas grants are spent on emergencies work. We maintain stocks of water-supply kits, feeding kits, plastic sheeting for emergency shelter, and blankets, in order to be able to respond quickly to disasters wherever they occur.

In 1991-92, Oxfam worked through national branches of the Red Crescent Society in Turkey and Iran to help Kurdish refugees from Iraqi repression; in Bangladesh, there was a cyclone in April 1991 which killed some 200,000 people. On Hatiya Island, where damage was very severe, a local organisation supported by Oxfam was able to distribute rice and lentils to the most needy families. In Ethiopia and Somalia in particular, insecurity and instability continued to make demands on Oxfam's relief funds. In Somaliland (northern Somalia) Oxfam engineers helped to install emergency water supplies in towns and rural areas for people returning from Ethiopia. When Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines erupted, the Oxfam country office supported local partners in providing shelter, food, and clean water for evacuees from the slopes of the volcano. Work with refugees and displaced people — with Burmese refugees in Bangladesh, Bhutanese in Nepal, Malian Tuaregs in Mauritania, Cambodians returning from exile, and people displaced within their own country — continued to be a major aspect of Oxfam's emergency programme as conflict, environmental deterioration, or poverty forced a growing number of people to leave their homes.

*In 1984-85 we launched our biggest-ever emergency relief operation in response to famine in Ethiopia. Our income rose from £23.9 million in 1983-84 to £51.1 million in 1984-85.*

*Providing clean water in refugee camps safeguards health.*

N. COOPER AND J. HAMMOND/OXFAM



# Specialist units

The work of Oxfam's staff around the world is supported by several specialist Units based in the UK.

## Emergencies Unit

We can respond to disasters quickly and effectively, by combining the central resources of our specialist Emergencies Unit and the local resources of our country offices, whose staff manage the emergency programme, and can release extra funds as soon as the need arises. Supplies can be flown out from our Emergencies Store at Bicester (near Oxford), which is always fully stocked with equipment. There are other stores of emergency equipment in Uganda and Ethiopia.

*When people were fleeing from the invasion of Kuwait in 1991, Oxfam water engineers were sent with water equipment, 1,000 shelter units, and 11,000 blankets. Working with the Jordanian Water Authority, they supplied water to 100,000 people.*

PAUL SHERLOCK / OXFAM

## Technical Unit

Oxfam's water engineers are internationally respected for setting up large-scale water supplies rapidly in the most difficult emergency situations. They are supported by a small team of



engineers based in the Technical Unit in Oxford. 'In the future we will continue to fund technical work in emergencies,' says Ben Fawcett of the Technical Unit, 'but increasingly our aim is to pass on our experience to local counterparts, sending out people from the UK only when it is really necessary.'

The Technical Unit also supports Oxfam's long-term development work throughout the world, specialising in environmental health issues. This work ranges from liaison with consultants and suppliers for the rehabilitation of Phnom Penh's water supply, to advice on handpumps and studies of hygiene behaviour. The Unit aims to act as a focus for sharing the lessons learned from projects around the world.

## **Health Unit**

At times of disasters, our Health Unit staff assess the initial health and nutrition requirements, and supply materials and resources which they have developed themselves, such as feeding and immunisation kits, and information manuals.

In the long term Oxfam tackles the causes of illness in poor countries by promoting Primary Health Care programmes. PHC includes training community health workers, and promoting improved diets, access to clean water, health education, immunisation programmes, mother and child health-care services, family-planning services, and policies on appropriate drug use. Community participation at all levels of decision making is crucial to this approach.

## **Gender and Development Unit**

Oxfam's Gender and Development Unit (GADU) was set up in 1985. The Unit's role is to consult women in poor communities, identify their needs, promote understanding among Oxfam's own staff and all groups about women's needs and their contribution to survival and development, and ensure that women benefit as much as men in all that Oxfam does. An increasing number of Oxfam's staff worldwide are women, and some are specifically recruited to be advisers on gender and development.

A recent innovation is a scheme to facilitate networking between women's groups worldwide, to enable them to explore common problems and possible solutions. This will continue to be an Oxfam priority in the future.

## **Public Policy Department**

Oxfam's Public Policy Department, based in Oxford, undertakes research and advocacy work. Informed by the experience of our partners around the world, the staff talk to decision-makers in the



*We support many health clinics like this one in Tanzania in their long-term programmes.*

CHRIS JOHNSON / OXFAM

UK government, and other institutions, asking for changes in policy (for example, on international debt, terms of trade, and aid) that would benefit people oppressed by poverty and injustice in the South. The Department also facilitates the lobbying work of Oxfam's Southern partners and shares information on policy debates, working in close liaison with other non-government organisations in the South and North.

### **Co-funding Unit**

Our Co-funding Unit applies to the UK government's Overseas Development Administration, and to the European Community, for 50 per cent funding of selected Oxfam development projects. The Unit currently raises approximately £4 million from the ODA and £2.5 million from the EC each year. Oxfam has set a limit so that no more than 10 per cent of our income can come from either source. This means that we can maintain our independence and continue to work in a non-partisan way around the world.

### **Planning and Evaluation Unit**

The Planning and Evaluation Unit supports the country and regional offices to ensure good practice in planning, monitoring and evaluating our work. The Unit also suggests suitable consultants for evaluations when requested.

### **Information and Systems Unit**

The Information and Systems Unit supports the management and administrative work of Oxfam's offices worldwide. The Unit has a library of resources, and a Decentralisation Project which aims to strengthen the skills of all our country and regional offices in computers, finance and management systems.

## Future directions

The support of networking between groups with common interests has become an important part of our work. It helps them to escape from their isolation and learn from each other. It can also promote the formation of local and national federations, strengthening the access of groups to funding and information independently of us, and enabling them to draw up and present proposals to decision makers.

Josephina (Fifa) Stubbs, coordinator of our South-South Environment Linking Project, talks of her project as one of two pilot initiatives through which we hope to share experiences and ideas among our counterparts in the South, and between ourselves and other organisations in the North.

'We are becoming involved in South-South linking,' says Fifa, 'not only because groups in the South have much to gain and learn from each other, but also because it is essential that we learn about what is going on in the South and in the North in networking and push towards a more global process of change.'



*Josephina Stubbs in discussion with some of the facilitators of the Environment Linking Project.*

JAMES HAWKINS/OXFAM

*'We are becoming involved in South-South linking ... because it is essential that we learn about what is going on in the South and in the North in networking and push towards a more global process of change.'*

The Environment Linking Project supported a series of exchanges between women and men from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East who face environmental challenges related to conflict, access to land and water, fishing, pastoralism, and other issues. A central objective is to enable our counterparts to engage directly in international debates on issues that affect their lives, and to begin to influence the way those debates are initiated and conducted.

In a similar way 'Women to Women Worldwide', a project organised over three years by our Gender and Development Unit (GADU), aims to create a global in-depth discussion of the problems faced by women. The first step was to bring together women working with women's groups from the South and enable them to visit groups working on similar issues in the UK and Ireland, as well as to network with each other.

The Southern women are helping to plan a conference to be held in 1993 for development practitioners from South and North, which will look closely at Oxfam's development aid from a Southern gender perspective and enable people working in the South to define their priorities and draw up guidelines for future gender-aware approaches to development.

The aim of both these exciting initiatives is to enable people from the South to join in formulating Oxfam's policies and the policies of other Northern-based agencies like ours. They represent a vital new stage in Oxfam's ability to approach debates on development from a Southern perspective.

*Vanete Almeida from Brazil (right) and Viji Srinivasan from India (far right) from the 'Women to Women Worldwide Linking' project*

PHOTOS BY ROBERT DAVIS/OXFAM



# Oxfam Trading

We in Oxfam like to think of ourselves as forming a bridge of people who work together to confront the causes and effects of poverty. This idea inspired us to use Oxfam shops in a special way.

The 'Bridge Scheme', a part of Oxfam Trading, sells goods made by groups around the world. They include hand-crafted gifts, textiles, household items, and foods, which are sold in Oxfam shops and to mail-order customers.

Bridge is a fair-trade programme. It supports producers with advice on design and marketing, and pays them good prices (in advance, where appropriate). A quarter of the annual profits is paid to the producers, while the rest is used for loans and grants to new or already-established producers.

Bridge is targeted particularly at marginalised groups in poorer countries who have few alternative sources of income, like landless farmers, people living in urban poverty, refugees, and people with disabilities.



*The new fair-trade coffee, CaféDirect, and many other Oxfam Trading goods, are sold through our shops.*

JEREMY HARTLEY / OXFAM

*Oxfam Activities Limited, incorporating Oxfam Trading, was set up in 1965. All trading profits are donated back to Oxfam.*

*In 1965 Oxfam Trading's income from sales was £3,000. In 1990-91 it was £9 million.*

*Bridge imports goods from 300 groups in 40 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.*

Bridge produces a magazine called *Bridge News* three times a year. It is distributed to craft producers throughout the world, as well as to Alternative Trade (fair trading) Organisations.

Oxfam Trading is a central part of a fair-trade movement that extends across Europe, and recently we joined with three other fair-trading organisations – Equal Exchange, Traidcraft, and Twin Trading – to market a fair-trade coffee called CaféDirect, which will help small-scale coffee producers in Mexico, Peru, and Costa Rica to get better prices.

Oxfam Trading has increased the number of its staff based around the world, to give more practical support to producers in India, South East Asia, and Central America.

### **The Good Neighbours Scheme**

Oxfam Trading also promotes goods from workshops in the UK which employ people with disabilities or train young unemployed people. In this way we are a bridge of people supporting producers of fair-trade goods across the world.



*The 1,500 Nakshi Kantha embroiderers are Oxfam Trading partners in Jamalpur in Bangladesh. The women producers put some of their earnings into a group savings scheme, from which loans are made to buy cattle, and purchase land or seeds. For each of the 22 groups there is a small school for the women's children.*

BADAL/OXFAM

## Fundraising

Most of Oxfam's income comes from voluntary donations from hundreds of thousands of people, companies, private trusts, schools, community groups, and trade unions, all of whom believe in the right of people everywhere to food, health, fair wages, and reasonable conditions of life.

People support our work for a variety of reasons, and give their time as well as their money. Member of Parliament Lynne Jones responds to special appeals, but also gives 0.7 per cent of her monthly salary. 'That is the United Nations target for the proportion of their Gross National Product that richer nations should give to poorer countries. The British government gives less than half of that. But 0.7 per cent of my income is a tiny sum. It's even more shameful that we can't achieve it as a nation. We spend more on hairdressing than we do on aid.'

Jean Lennox is a highly qualified nurse who makes an effort to find out about the wider world. She is also a post-graduate student in Development Studies and works as a part-time volunteer in Oxfam's office in Birmingham. 'Working for Oxfam makes my

*In the past five years we have received donations from 7,000 companies, 785 trusts, over 5,000 churches, community groups and schools, and many trade unions.*



*Over 5,000 students helped to raise funds for Oxfam at the Birmingham Fun Run.*

ROBERT DAVIS/OXFAM

*In 1991-92 our income was  
£73.3 million pounds.  
£29 million came from  
donations from individuals  
and groups.*

interest less academic and more practical,' she says. 'I want to have an effect. I feel I benefit from the real contact which Oxfam has with people in other countries which I cannot have as an individual.'

Thousands of regular donors give us more than one kind of support. Yvonne Hodgkinson, for example, gives a regular 'Covenant' donation to Oxfam over an agreed period. Apart from collecting money, she and her husband also write to their Member of Parliament, help on Oxfam information stalls at public events, and explain Oxfam's concerns to the wider public. 'Maybe because I have enough money, I have a sense of guilt,' she says. 'I feel I should give to people who are poor, and particularly to those living in poorer countries, because they seem so exploited by the rich world.'

## **Where the money comes from**

Through our Central Fundraising Section we run national advertising campaigns and centralised schemes for donors.

Tens of thousands of people respond to newspaper and television appeals at times of emergencies around the world, and many of them become regular donors. Some people give directly from their salaries, others to a 'Project Fund' which supports particular aspects of our work — projects which help people with disabilities, or farming communities, for example. Everyone who contributes is given up-to-date information about long-term development work around the world, describing people's efforts to achieve dignity, justice, and self-sufficiency.

Many supporters ask friends and others for donations when they take part in sponsored events. In 1991, for example, over 5,000 students raised £40,000 by taking part in a running competition where their friends promised them a fixed donation for every kilometre they ran.

*'I want to have an effect. I feel I benefit from the real contact which Oxfam has with people in other countries which I cannot have as an individual.'*

ANTHONY SWIFT/OXFAM



## **New ideas**

In a new approach, we are asking particular types of workers to support development work around the world which is directly related to their own work. For example, a 'Health Fund' tries to raise money from medical professionals to support health programmes. In return they get information about the health problems of people in poorer countries.

'Oxfam cannot hope to help people overseas in their struggle against hunger, disease, exploitation, and poverty without first contributing to a deeper understanding of the problems faced in those regions,' says Mark Luetchford, appointed to pioneer these so-called 'Sector Appeals'. 'That is why fundraising has to be combined with giving information about the work of groups that Oxfam supports. If this information is relevant to their own work, then people will have a greater understanding of how they can contribute to the work of our partners.'

# Oxfam Shops

When, in 1947, we opened our first shop to sell some of the goods given to us by members of the public, we had little idea what we were starting. Today our shops are found throughout the UK and Ireland.

Oxfam shops make money because most of the goods they sell — books, records, or anything which other people may have a use for — are given by the public, and because most of the people involved in running them are volunteers.

People buy from Oxfam shops for different reasons. Increasing levels of poverty in the UK and Ireland mean that many people can't afford to buy new clothes and other items. For others it just makes good sense. Anna Claude, an architecture student, buys clothes from Oxfam shops 'because it's silly not to. You can get high-quality clothes at a reasonable price, and feel that you may be doing some good.'

Many shop volunteers greatly value the opportunity to be of service to people in poor communities around the world. 'People are increasingly aware of wastefulness and they want to recycle things,' says Dorothy Clarke, a Shop Manager in Coventry. As one of our paid managers, she heads a team of 60 or so shop volunteers. 'I see Oxfam as recycling not only goods, but also the talents and skills of people who volunteer to work for us.'

## A host of helping hands

Jessie Aitken, a volunteer in our shop group in Lanark in Scotland, agreed to work as a shop volunteer because she had some spare time when she retired from her job as a school headmistress. Many of the 50 volunteers who work with her are retired and find that working in the shop has been a good way of making friends. The volunteers also hold fundraising events like craft shows, talks, and cake sales. The shop has a well-run book section, and the goods donated by the local farming community are of a high quality. The shop attracts customers from far and wide.

*Ruth Crawford: 'Everyone benefits.'*

ANTHONY SWIFT/OXFAM



*The first Oxfam shop opened in Oxford in 1947.*

*There are currently 890 shops in the UK and Ireland.*

*In 1990-91 there were 30,000 volunteers working for Oxfam. Around 27,000 of them worked in Oxfam shops.*

*In Newcastle a new shop for children and mothers sends all its profits to a children's project in Africa.*

Most shop volunteers are women, often retired, but there are many younger volunteers. The growing problem of long-term unemployment prompts them to volunteer for some worthwhile work. In some cases it can lead to full-time employment; many of Oxfam's own staff started as volunteers! Some volunteers work regularly half a day a week, others work every day. They volunteer because they have time to spare. 'I have a pension and so I can choose to think about others,' says one volunteer. 'We shop helpers benefit from the social opportunities; the people who come to buy benefit from the low-priced goods; and the people we work with overseas also benefit,' says Ruth Crawford, who helps to supervise the book section in the Lanark shop.

The Drury Lane shop in London is a lively, city-centre shop which is supported by more than 100 volunteers, many of them young people. Shona Abantu, the volunteer Shop leader, is a white South African who was orphaned and brought up by black South African parents. Yinka Sobande and her friend Mercy Oghenekaro are volunteers with Nigerian backgrounds. The large Bengali community settled in the area find themselves addressed in their own language by volunteers from their own community.

Yinka set aside a year to work in the shop before going to college. 'I felt I could give a year', she says, 'though of course I will always be involved now.' Shona reinforces the message: 'There are people in this country who are genuinely concerned about what is happening to people in poorer countries and feel a strong solidarity with them — not the superficial concern of so many politicians, but that of people who are willing to give their time. That was a very important discovery for me when I came here.'

*Clare O'Doherty (below, left) says volunteering makes her feel she is doing something useful with her life. Tim Cole (below, right) is an artist-sculptor who works alone in a studio. Volunteering in the shop enables him to meet other people.*

JEREMY HARTLEY/OXFAM



# Wastesaver

In 1975 Oxfam Activities Limited, a subsidiary trading company whose profits are given back to Oxfam, established Wastesaver, which has become Europe's largest reprocessing plant for textiles. Clothes and textiles that cannot be sold in Oxfam shops are sent to this enormous waste-recycling centre in Huddersfield.

Wastesaver staff sort through textiles, aluminium cans, bottle tops and other items collected by Oxfam supporters. The better clothes are taken and sold at low prices through 15 'Surplus Shops'. The remaining items are sold as industrial rags and filling for furniture.

Forty employees work at Wastesaver, sorting the materials into large bales of leather, trousers, blankets, woollens, and other categories. Each bale has a different market value, from £150 per ton for neckties to £8,500 per ton for Cashmere wool! Wastesaver is developing new ways of adding value to the materials it sells.

Wastesaver also sends large quantities of clothing for emergency relief work around the world. The reports back from the refugee camps confirm that the clothing continues to be useful. A trial shipment of warm clothing has been sent to a non-governmental agency in the former Soviet Union. It will be sold cheaply in local shops, and the profits will be used to support a range of local small-scale development projects in Russia. This experiment could lead to a more regular trade with appropriate charitable organisations in Eastern European countries.

Staff at Wastesaver are committed to Oxfam's wider work. Lillian Sylvester, for example, raised £38 by asking friends to give her money for going without food in Oxfam's annual Fast. Lillian also organised a sale of items, including cakes, given by friends and Wastesaver colleagues. 'I've known what it is like to be poor,' she says.

*Wastesaver is now the biggest textile reprocessing plant in Europe.*

*In 1990-91 Wastesaver dealt with approximately 10,000 tonnes of textiles and 60 tonnes of aluminium.*

*Staff at Wastesaver sorting textiles and recycled clothes.*

ROBERT DAVIS/OXFAM



## Education and Youth work

*'We encourage young people to challenge their prejudiced European view of the world.'*

Oxfam reaches out to young people – between the ages of 5 and 18 years – in the UK and Ireland to help them understand the unfair relationships between rich and poor countries and what they can do about them.

Fiona Collins is an educational adviser who works in London with teachers. 'Most teachers,' she says, 'believe in equal rights. We want to ensure that the issues of equal opportunities are high on the list of priorities, and we know that we will get support from Oxfam.'

Just as Oxfam funds community projects around the world, Oxfam's Youth and Education Department co-funds more than 50 independent Development Education Centres, youth work and school projects, and theatre-in-education groups which help teachers and young people to understand the lives of people in other countries, their problems and their achievements, and the interdependent nature of global concerns.

*School pupils use one of the many development education games to learn about people's lives in other countries.*

Geoff Sayer/Oxfam



A lot of teaching is done by getting young people to play learning games. 'Hanging by a Thread' is a game about unfair trade. Young people take on roles such as cotton pickers, clothes makers, and buyers. These groups are then told that a pair of jeans sells for £24, and they have to decide what they should each be paid. 'They always want more than £24,' says Ros Wade, one of our Education Advisers who uses such games with school pupils. 'The children then discover that the pickers get almost nothing and most of the money goes to the rich countries. Then they go on to look at commodity prices, why manufacturing doesn't usually happen in Tanzania (which is used as the example in this game) and why Tanzania is forced into producing cotton.' Our Education Advisory Units help school teachers to include good teaching materials in their lessons. Subjects like geography, history, and science can all include information on people and issues around the world, and older pupils now have to study a developing country and its people to increase their knowledge of world issues.

Many volunteers help our education work. Debbie Hall is an ecologist interested in human and environmental development matters. She organised a conference for 90 students from different schools on environmental issues. One of the discussions centred on the idea that 'Men exploit the environment in the same way as they exploit women'. Students said afterwards that it had been good to have a serious discussion about issues not normally touched on at school, and which they would usually only joke about.

The best way for young people to learn about their links with other people in the world is by using their own skills. 'The teaching methods we use promote group work and cooperation among the children,' says Sarah Crowley, a worker in one of Oxfam's Education Resources Centres. 'We encourage young people to challenge their prejudiced European view of the world. They can also develop problem-solving skills while playing the games we use.'

Oxfam's Youth Work Unit also provides materials and training for youth workers who work in a wide variety of youth clubs. It contributes to the magazine *The Edge*, which highlights issues of poverty, culture, and development, and makes links between the people of the Northern and Southern hemispheres in ways that are relevant to young people. It also assists with exchange visits for youth workers around the world and advises the government on national youth work policies.

Through our Youth and Education Department we are linked into the development education movement in the UK, Ireland, and Europe. The Department wants to share the philosophy of development education with Oxfam's partners around the world, and is concerned to extend and strengthen its networking with Southern partners.

*Youth and Education staff and volunteers work in five Education Advisory Units and other regional Oxfam offices around the UK and Ireland.*

*The Education Enquiry service in Oxford dealt with 7,000 letters from teachers and young people in 1990-91.*

## Campaigning

Oxfam's believes that informing people and bringing them together enables them to act against poverty and contribute to the growing anti-poverty movement in the UK and Ireland.

'I want to talk about responsibility, because communities work when people take responsibility for making them work,' says Shôn Devey, one of Oxfam's Campaigns Organisers, to a group of students in Bangor in Wales. Shôn, who speaks in Welsh and has lived and worked around the world, is keen to make global connections. 'I argue that we have a responsibility not only to our own community but also the international community. This is because everything we do connects us to the world system— the food we eat, the clothes we buy, the decisions we make. Only when we are aware of those connections can we begin to act responsibly.'

*Oxfam volunteer campaigner Peter Walsh tests public attitudes to fair-trade policies by doing a street survey.*

ANTHONY SWIFT/OXFAM



He explains how decisions by the world's powerful countries affect people and the environment in distant countries. 'To repay its international debt, for example, Senegal has encouraged the growing of groundnuts for export. As a result, herders cannot use the land they have used for many years. The groundnuts are exported to feed cattle to produce milk, of which there is already a huge surplus. So Europe produces milk powder and sells it back to poorer countries for children who are starving because their parents have lost their land in the first place.'

'In what is called the global village', continues Shôn, 'this kind of process means that one billion people in the world live in desperate poverty. The question I ask myself is: "Should I help to feed the people who are starving, or should I look at the causes and try to solve the problems that cause starvation?" We need to listen, talk and work with the people of the world community to tackle the world's problems.'

Oxfam's choice of campaigning themes is made by the Overseas, Campaigns, and Public Policy Departments. Our current campaigns are to encourage richer countries to reform unfair trade policies, increase aid to poorer countries, reduce debt repayments, contribute to environmentally safe development, and be sensitive to women's needs in their development plans. We are helped by

volunteers who pay a small fee to belong to the Oxfam Campaigning Network. They receive four newsletters each year with detailed information on campaigns issues. 'Urgent Action Mailings' also ask members to write to their Members of Parliament and other influential people when, for example, more government aid is needed at times of disaster, as in Africa in 1992.

Peter Walsh is a Campaigning Network volunteer in London. He works for a charity that provides housing and a day-care centre in the area where he lives, and explains: 'I volunteer in my spare time because poverty strikes me as being the biggest of all injustices.'

Sandra Hewett, the director of a public relations company, is also a Network member and the coordinator of another London campaigns group. Her group visited all their local political candidates at election time to try to persuade them to support anti-poverty policies. They write regularly to their MPs, and run information stalls in public places. She says, 'We have more influence on politicians when we talk to them and we make it clear we are volunteers. They pay more attention to ordinary voters than to Oxfam or its staff.' Sandra says she began to learn about development from her involvement with environmental organisations, and belonging to the Network gives her more information about the links between poverty and the environment.

Richard Wallace, our Campaigns Organiser in Birmingham, England, says that giving people from development programmes around the world a chance to visit and talk to people (including decision-makers, journalists, and Oxfam's staff and volunteers) is a very effective way to campaign. Richard writes a regular column for his local newspaper on environment and development issues.

*Oxfam started in 1942 with a campaign, collecting signatures on a public petition asking the UK government to allow aid to go to starving refugees in Greece.*

*In the 1960s Oxfam was active in the United Nations 'Freedom from Hunger' campaign, which stressed the need to tackle the causes of poverty.*

*In 1991 Oxfam launched its new 'Oxfam Campaigning Network'. By 1992 there were 4,000 members.*



*Mark Turpin talks with an Irish Minister at a campaigns event with other agencies in Dublin, Ireland.*

ANTHONY SWIFT/OXFAM

# Information and Publications

Oxfam's Information Department provides written and spoken information about Oxfam's work and concerns for the general public and for other staff and volunteers involved in communications. The Department produces *Oxfam News*, an illustrated quarterly magazine featuring Oxfam's overseas programme and activities in the UK and Ireland; the organisation's Annual Report; and a series of information leaflets on different aspects of Oxfam's work. In addition, the Department responds directly to enquiries by phone and letter from the general public (averaging 6,500 a year). The Resources Centre at Oxfam headquarters in Oxford acts as a showcase for all current Oxfam communications materials.

*Julia Mosse, author of our book India: Paths to Development, and Kishore Saint, a project partner from India, travelled around the UK and Ireland to help to launch the new publication.*

JAMES HAWKINS/OXFAM

The Publications Unit produces books, journals, and reports written by staff and contracted authors about a variety of development issues. The wide-ranging list ranges from specialist books, written by Oxfam's own health and technical staff targeted at development workers, to illustrated reports, such as the 'Country Profile' series, for readers with a general interest in Oxfam's work.

One of the most valued publications is *The Oxfam Handbook for Development Workers*, a guide to Oxfam's own development practice. Now a widely-used text on development issues, it includes case studies, strategies, and practical advice and is regularly updated and revised.

Both the Information and Publications Department are involved in one of Oxfam's important functions — to educate and inform people in the UK and Ireland about the nature, causes and effects of poverty. To produce all these varied materials, Oxfam can call upon the services of a team of skilled designers, in the Design Unit, and a modern and efficient in-house Print Unit.



## Press and Television

Oxfam's busy Press Office plays many different roles besides the usual one of trying to publicise our organisation as widely as possible. It responds to a large number of enquiries from journalists interested in development issues, and tries to alert the media to news stories like the growing famine conditions in much of Africa in 1992, and important issues like inadequate levels of international aid.

Our Press Office staff also work hard to improve the quality of radio and TV programmes on Southern issues in the UK and Ireland. They do this by reacting quickly and creatively to stories and events in the world, and by developing long-term relationships with journalists. This means continually having to update information and material from around the world.

We also try to improve media communications by working together with other international development agencies, for example by supporting the work of the International Broadcasting Trust, an agency which specialises in making educational programmes on Southern issues, to be shown on national television.

The Press Office works closely with Oxfam's offices around the world to make sure that all the news items and feature material that it produces for magazines and newspapers represent people's lives as accurately as possible.

*David Bryer (standing), Oxfam's Director, with invited speakers, at one of our frequent press conferences to brief the UK and Irish media on development issues*

ROBERT DAVIS/OXFAM



## Oxfam International

Originally Oxfam was an organisation that existed only in the UK and Ireland. However, over the years other international development organisations associated with a common set of humanitarian values have been established in several countries, under the name 'Oxfam'. They are:



Community Aid Abroad.



The international Oxfams are united by their common purpose, but the development programmes that each supports around the world are quite independent, as are their styles of working and the ways in which they are organised. However, representatives from Oxfams working in the same countries or regions do meet to discuss common ways of working and priorities. There are also other times when all the international Oxfams work together: in times of disaster and emergencies around the world, for example, or in joining together to ask governments to take steps to reduce poverty and suffering in the world.

*Now that you have found out more about Oxfam, we hope you will want to become involved. There are many different ways of helping — by giving time, as a volunteer; by raising money; by campaigning or helping in our education work; or by giving clothes and other saleable items to your local Oxfam shop. If you want to know more about getting involved, get in touch with your local Oxfam Office (address in the telephone directory) or write to:*

*Oxfam Information,  
274 Banbury Road,  
Oxford OX2 7DZ.*

*All our work needs money, and we depend on the generosity of people like you to help us to support the efforts of people in other countries to tackle the causes of poverty and build a better life. There are different ways of giving to Oxfam, and if you ring us on 0865 313131 we can take a credit card donation immediately or explain how you can make regular gifts.*