

Campaigning for change

All over the world, people are proving that old patterns and ways of running things can be changed, and that hunger, poverty, and powerlessness are not inevitable. They are demanding, and obtaining, a realisation of their rights in ways that might have seemed unthinkable to their parents or grandparents — or even, once, to themselves.

And their efforts are being mirrored by the campaigning actions of people in the world's affluent countries: people who know that it is morally wrong for their own prosperity to be paid for by depriving others of their basic rights; people who understand that there can be no genuine or lasting security for anyone in a world where one person in four is denied the most basic of rights; people who are prepared to turn their concerns into effective action.

Some of this action happens out in the community: visits to MPs, organising petitions. Some takes the form of dialogue between staff from organisations such as Oxfam and senior officials from the world's governments or international financial institutions. Wherever and however it takes place, people are most likely to be effective when their convictions are based on clear, accurate information and on respect for the understanding and achievements of the people for whose rights they are campaigning.

Showing the way

Rosangela lives in a hot, one-roomed shack in the *favela*, or shanty town, of Beira Rio in Recife, Brazil. The shanty town is a maze of narrow, wooden walkways and tiny make-shift homes, suspended precariously above an old mangrove swamp. Live electricity wires dangle overhead; below, the wood is rotten, and gaping holes reveal steaming sewage in the water. Yet behind the *favela* lies a large plot of dry land, which is completely unused. It belongs to the military, and the residents of Beira Rio

dare not build houses on it for fear of being roughly evicted.

Built on a swamp, the *favela* is particularly prone to rats. Rosangela, along with the Residents' Association, has been involved in lobbying the council to get rid of them. "I found two dead rats under my cooker. There were times when I couldn't sleep — there were rats scuttling around on the floor and in my saucepans. We managed to persuade the council to lay down poison, and since then we haven't seen any rats."

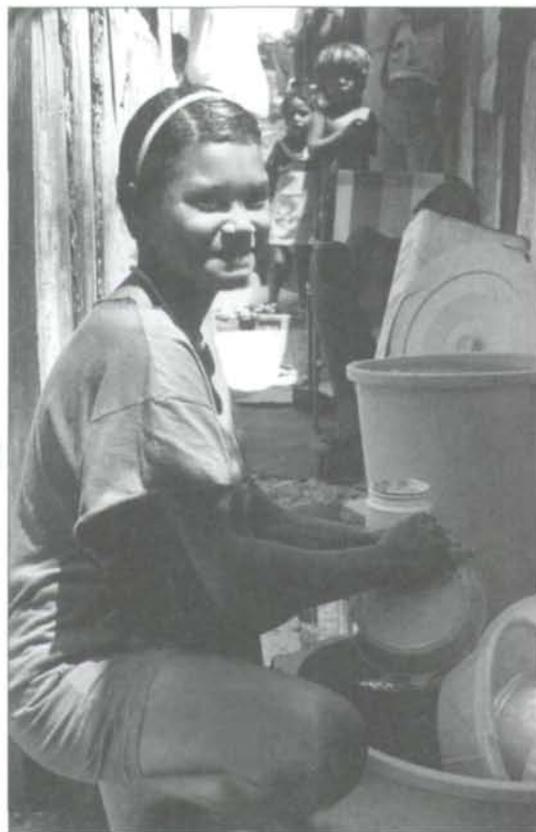
The gap between rich and poor in Brazil is one of the most pronounced in the world. Its huge wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small number of powerful people, those who gained most from the military government's "economic miracle" of the 1960s and 1970s. Out in the countryside 44 per cent of the land (and most of the cultivable land) is owned by just 1 per cent of the population; 67 per cent of landholders occupy just 6 per cent. Brazil is the world's second-largest agricultural exporter, but, in 1994, more than 32 million people, out of a population of 154 million, were living in absolute poverty. One-third of all Brazilians do not have enough to eat, and malnutrition causes seven out of ten deaths among children under five.

On an income of six dollars a day for doing washing and cleaning jobs, Rosangela is pretty near the bottom of the heap. But, luckily, Beira Rio now has a very active Residents' Association, which in turn is part of one of the most dynamic anti-poverty movements in the world today: the Hunger Campaign.

The Campaign aims to motivate Brazilian citizens to tackle the poverty in their country. Rich and poor, young and old, bankers, computer programmers, shop-keepers, and cleaners are all getting involved: some do house-to-house collections, or contribute part of their salary, others donate luncheon vouchers. 4,500 inmates in nine prisons in Rio de Janeiro fasted, in solidarity, for the Campaign, and were able to donate their missed meals (about 2.5 tons of food) to feed 200 families for two weeks.

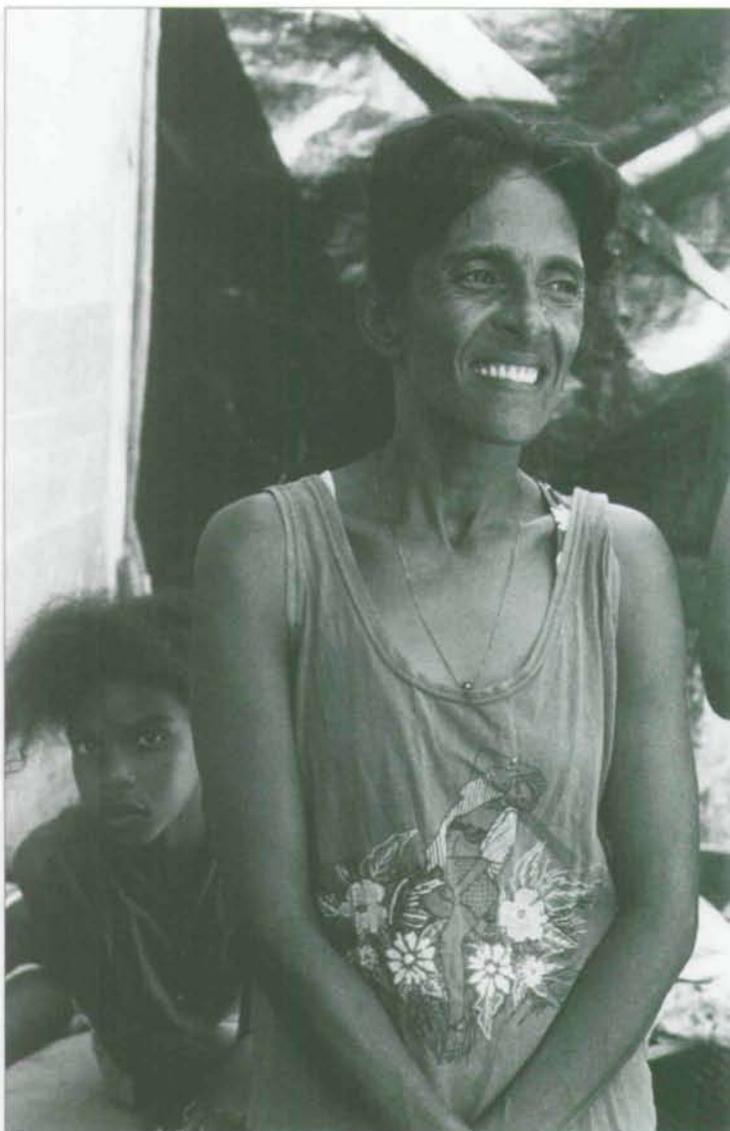
"We couldn't wait for the state to act," says Vando Nogueiro, a former Campaign coordinator in Recife, "so we decided to try to meet people's most immediate needs, and then try to deal with poverty on a more permanent basis."

Beira Rio is one of many areas which is now able to run a community soup-kitchen, thanks to the support of the Hunger



Rosangela washing up in the alley outside her home.

photo: Steve Andrews



Ediasusa Maria do Santo, Vice-President of Beira Rio Residents' Association. "We are discussing setting up a community school, to fill the gap in the school timetable in the middle of the day. It could help children who have problems learning to read."

photo: Steve Andrews

2,500 calories, so you can see the cause of starvation in Brazil is not a lack of food. This year we intend to start discussing agricultural reform. We will lose friends because it's a harder nut to crack — people's personal interests are at stake. The root causes of poverty are so visible it's not hard to talk about them; what is hard is to tackle them."

The Hunger Campaign is a new way of addressing these explosive political issues, by mobilising the concern of ordinary people. "It's a creative way of harnessing the desire of citizens to do away with hunger. We want one citizen to show solidarity with another citizen."

Miguel Anacleto, a computer programmer with the Bank of Brazil, and the co-ordinator of a group working with Indian community organisations, has a still wider vision. "My vision is

Campaign, and the work of volunteers like Rosangela. But soup-kitchens are just a beginning; their main value is as a means of encouraging poor communities to organise themselves and demand their basic rights. With the help of the Campaign, the Residents' Association has publicised the district's rat problem, and pressurised the local council into taking action. Now they are campaigning to move to a new, dry site.

Media interest about the Campaign has been huge, helping to raise public awareness about the extent of poverty, and putting it firmly on the political agenda. As a result, in the recent general election, combating hunger featured in the manifestos of every election candidate.

Campaign activists believe hunger is basically a political problem. "In 1989 Brazil produced 58 million tonnes of grain," Vando points out. "In 1994 that was up to 74 million tonnes. And 58 million tonnes is enough to give every Brazilian 3,500 calories per day. An adult only needs

of links between people of the world that cut across government boundaries. My vision is of independent people showing solidarity."

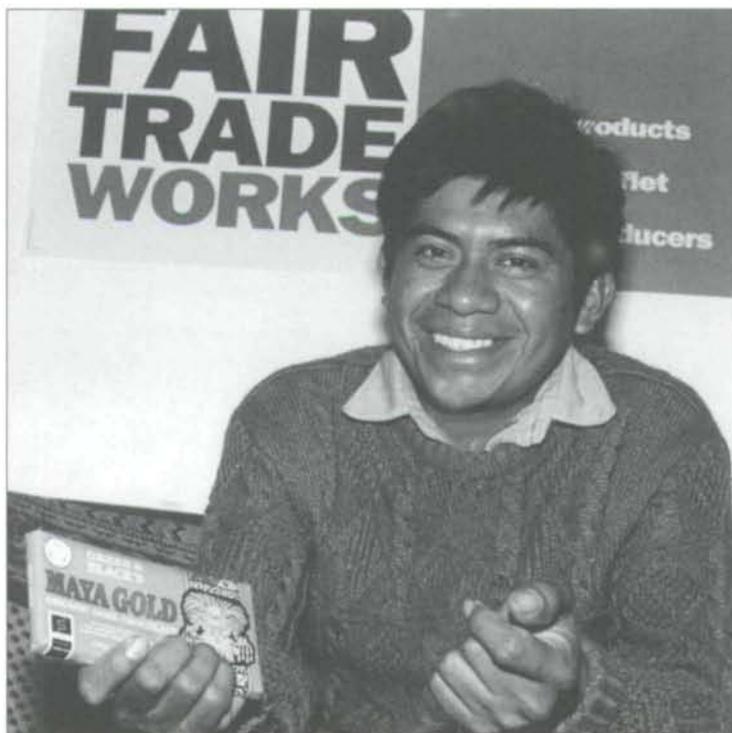
Sharing the struggle

Paying a fair price

Justino Peck lives with his wife, Cristina, and three children in a small, simple cabin in San Jose, Belize, Central America. Electricity has not yet reached their remote village, so for light they use kerosene lamps, made from instant coffee bottles with cotton cloth for wicks. A nearby hand-pump provides clean water. They cook over an open fire on the floor.

Their main source of income is cocoa beans. Planting and tending the cacao trees, and harvesting the beans, is hard work, and the farmers also have to transport their crop themselves to the warehouse in Punta Gorda. For Justino this means carrying a 100 pound sack of cocoa beans on his back across two miles of rough, frequently wet, terrain to the road, and then taking a two-hour trip by bus.

Nevertheless, until the early 1990s Justino and his family lived simply but comfortably. They were able to buy clothes and basic necessities, and enjoy a varied diet. But their security and



Justino Peck, in the UK for the launch of Maya Gold chocolate.

photo: James Hawkins

Florence Muhindo picking coffee in Uganda. Florence is poor because the price she gets for coffee is so low. She is one of millions kept poor by unfair patterns of trade.

photo: Geoff Sayer

comfort came to an end when the price of cocoa fell dramatically between 1992 and 1993. At a mere 22 pence a pound, less than half its former value, the crop was not even worth harvesting: they simply left it to rot. Stifled by weeds, the trees stood testimony to the plight of the farmers, and to the precariousness of livelihoods which depend on fluctuating world market prices.

Just before prices fell, the farmers of San Jose had set up a co-operative to transport and market their beans, with Justino as chair. They had taken out a loan so that they could pay farmers on delivery for their crops. But, with prices so low, they failed to attract many farmers and soon fell behind with their loan repayments.

The future looked bleak, when the group was approached by Green and Black's, a UK chocolate company, who wanted to buy their cocoa for their new Fair Trade "Maya Gold" chocolate. The company offered well above market price, at 48 pence per pound, and gave them a three-year guarantee to buy all they could produce.

With improved prices and a long-term trading commitment, the farmers now have an assurance that their hard work will be rewarded. Many local farmers who had abandoned their farms and emigrated in search of paid work are going back to their villages and their traditional work.



Consumer power in action

Not so many years ago people like Justino and Florence might as well have lived on a different planet as far as the rich world's chocolate eaters and coffee drinkers were concerned. Most UK consumers had only one aim: to pay as low a price as possible for the goods in their supermarket trolleys. The people who had grown the crops on which their comfort and convenience depended were shadowy figures half a world away, cogs in the mighty machine of international trade.

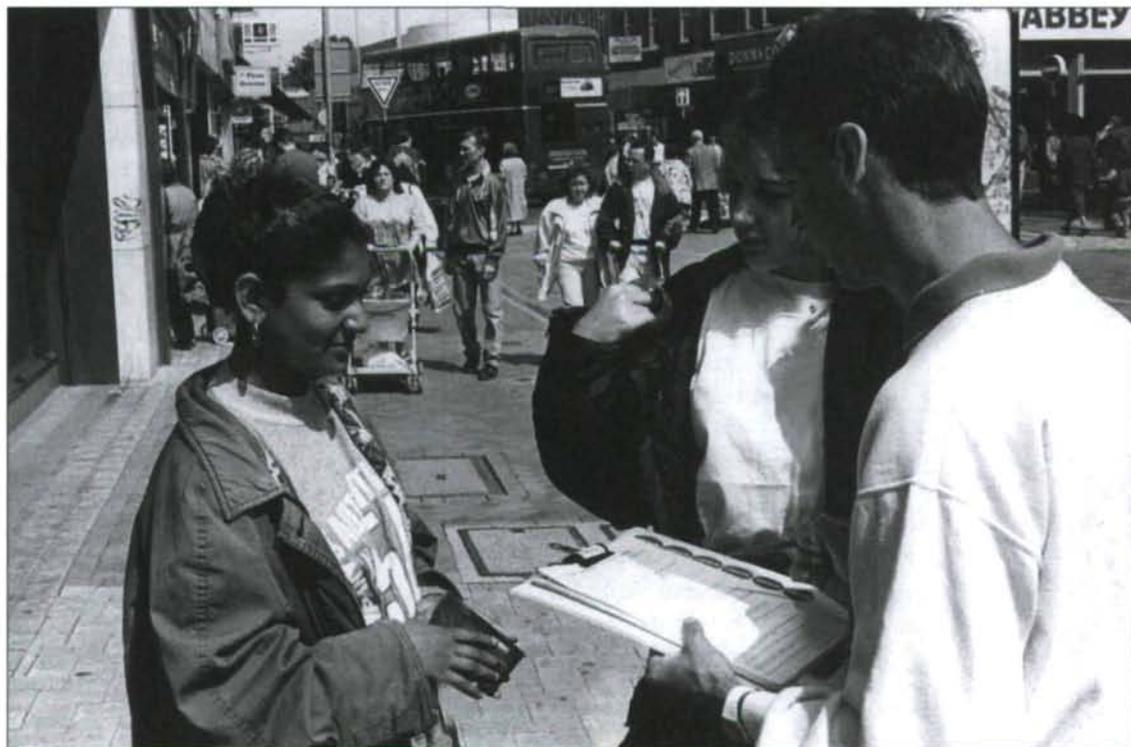
Today things are beginning to change. These Oxfam campaigners, like Justino, are part of a new movement, a movement that may, in time, revolutionise the way we go about our shopping.

Oxfam was one of the pioneers of the Fair Trade movement. Since the 1960s it has been buying crafts and food at a fair price from low-income Third World producers, and selling them through its shops and mail-order catalogue. Now it has moved on, with other agencies, to actively promoting the whole Fair Trade message.

Oxfam campaigners have helped to take that message right out into their communities: they have pressurised supermarkets to stock Fair Trade products like Cafédirect coffee, Clipper tea, and

Fair Trade campaigning in Croydon.

photo: Brian Beardwood





Preparing for an Oxfam Cafédirect tasting.

photo: Oxfam

"It's fun, the public like a free cup of coffee, and most seem genuinely interested in Fair Trade."

"Response to Cafédirect was entirely favourable. It's much easier to stop people if you have something to show them while they're talking to you."

"You can ask questions and complete surveys as they taste it, and then ask them to take action."

Maya Gold chocolate; they have urged consumers to buy — and demand — these products.

They have also taken the message to decision-makers. It was partly because of letters written by Oxfam supporters to the Ministry of Agriculture that proposed changes to the trade rules of the European Union were modified; changes affecting the livings of banana growers in the Windward Islands have been phased in more gradually than originally intended, to give them more time to adjust to increased competition.

Fair Trade campaigners have often found that they are pushing at an open door. The surveys they have conducted reveal shoppers overwhelmingly in favour of Fair Trade: 85 per cent of people surveyed have said they would like to see more Fair Trade products in their supermarkets. Within three years of its launch in 1991 a million jars of Cafédirect coffee had been sold. Price, of course, is still important, but for many people there is now a new dimension to shopping: the effect their decisions can have on poor producers thousands of miles away.

It is a message which the supermarkets are now listening to. Most of the big chains are consulting with organisations like the Fairtrade Foundation, and Sainsburys now get more letters on Fair Trade than on the length of their check-out queues! The buyer for the Edinburgh Safeway store reported that he had more favourable comments when he introduced Cafédirect than for any other product he had ever introduced. New lines

are being developed: Cafédirect instant coffee was launched in early 1994.

People-friendly shopping seems to be here to stay, and Oxfam campaigners are helping the momentum of what could become an unstoppable force.

Thinking globally: acting locally

... in Manchester

Few things have shocked the world more in recent years than the 1994 Rwanda massacres. In Manchester, local campaigners provided the means for the horror of local people to be translated into rapid and effective help. Then, as the TV cameras, inevitably, moved on to the next story, they helped to keep Rwanda's tragedy in the minds of ordinary Mancunians.

Within days of the first outbreaks of violence in Rwanda, they had helped staff from Oxfam's Emergency Unit to erect a giant water storage tank, identical to those used in emergency situations, in central Manchester. Shoppers and office-workers were offered the chance to "buy" a cup of water — a familiar enough situation for most refugees, but never experienced



Water equipment from the People's Plane begins the second leg of its journey.

photo: Pete Brabban

before by the citizens of Chorlton or Levenshulme. Civic leaders, politicians, religious leaders, a local actress, and children from local schools all helped to draw attention to the tank, and badger the public for money.

So generous was the response that within days £220,000 had been raised, enough to charter a plane and fill it with emergency supplies for Rwanda. The North-West People's Plane was one of eight funded and organised by Oxfam campaigners throughout the UK, and it left Newcastle for Goma, Zaire, on 12 August.

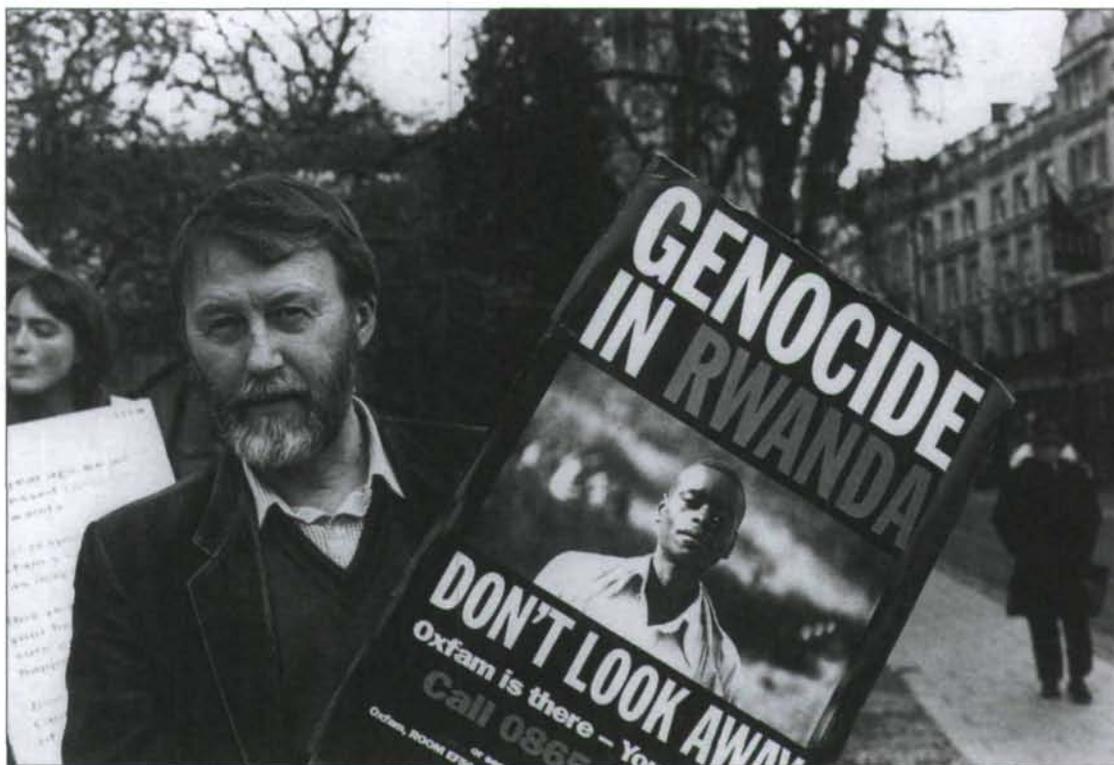
Manchester's campaigners were convinced their job was not over. They were determined to keep the issue live, but, like most local media, Manchester papers were interested only in news with a Manchester angle. Which is why the media turned out in force for a simple, but deeply moving, ceremony organised by local Oxfam campaigners in central Manchester's Peace Gardens: the planting of 20 forget-me-not plants.

... in Oxford

A similar problem faced the Oxford Oxfam Group when they tried to interest local media in the Rwanda tragedy. "Why should people in Oxford be worried about what's happening in Rwanda?" asked one journalist. "We tried to convince him that this was a moral issue, that Rwandans are people like us," remembers group member Joanna Gill. "We asked him what he thought people in Oxford would do if a similar horror hit us here. He was sceptical, but there was plenty of proof that people here *do* care. In just five months we raised over £6,000 from street collections, vigils, and collections in local pubs and theatres. And the local media came to recognise this concern — the Oxford Mail ran a special appeal on our behalf, and raised a further £6,000. A peaceful, affluent small city like Oxford is a world away from the Goma refugee camps, but people here did want to help."

Oxford is a world away, too, from the minefields of Cambodia or Mozambique. And, since they are countries which no longer hit even the national dailies, few people in Oxford know about the damage still being caused by mines: the men, women, and children who tread on them and lose their legs, their arms, their sight or their lives; the land that even hungry people do not dare to cultivate because they know it has been sown with mines.

When people do know the facts, they are appalled. "We collected over a hundred signatures to the anti-mines petition in just a couple of hours," says Joanna. "We set up a stall in town, and people were keen to sign. We were helped by a very good band busking just next to us. Once they knew what we were doing, they were all for us. Everyone who stopped to listen to them was told to come over and sign our petition. And they did."



Influencing the decision-makers

The Campaigns Network

"The pen is mightier than the sword." Well, maybe; maybe not. But a carefully thought out, well-reasoned letter is still a powerful weapon in the struggle for people's basic rights. Oxfam's Campaigns Network is made up of some 5,000 people who are prepared, first, to master the complexities and details of a whole range of issues, and, then, to put pen to paper or fingers to keyboards.

Quarterly newsletters keep them up to date with world events as they are affecting poor people in the countries where Oxfam works, and suggest concerns they might want to bring to the attention of decision-makers. These campaigners aim high, writing to their MPs when appropriate, but thinking nothing of tackling the Chairman of Tesco, the Prime Minister, or the President of the World Bank. So their letters have to be well informed, not open to being rejected out of hand because of details not considered.

"When Oxfam ran its Africa: Make or Break campaign," says Mark Luetchford, the Network Coordinator, "we had two main rallying cries: raise the aid, and cut the debt. They were simple, powerful, demands, which we knew would make a huge

Vigil for Rwanda at the Martyrs' Memorial, Oxford.

photo: Bob Crampton

Ian Hislop and Angus Deayton delivering letters to 10 Downing Street, with a cardboard cut-out of PM John Major. Some 30,000 letters from Oxfam campaigners expressed concern over threats to Africa's recovery.

photo: Andrew Simms



difference to people in Africa, and which people felt confident in outlining. But Networkers were also able to make more informed demands. They were able to write to people in power about the Trinidad Terms, and the virtues of selling off IMF gold stocks to fund debt write-offs. They could quote statistics and trends when lobbying the Prime Minister about proposed aid cuts."

The approach worked. The aid budget was frozen rather than cut in 1993; the freeze continued into 1994, but with promises of extra funds being made available in 1995. As for debt, Kenneth Clarke is currently pushing plans for debt reduction at G7 summits very similar to those proposed by Oxfam Networkers.

Other Network initiatives have had even more success. Tuzla airport was reopened in March 1994 for the passage of

relief goods after Network members bombarded the Prime Minister with letters asking Britain to use its influence as a Permanent Member of the Security Council. Ten days after the Network started a letter-writing campaign to the Foreign Office in 1994 calling for a ban on landmines, the UK government announced a restricted ban on British exports of landmines which do not self-destruct or self-neutralise. Foreign Office sources acknowledged the influence of “a certain letter-writing campaign”.

“In all modesty,” says Mark, “we can’t be sure that it was our campaign that made all the difference. But, judging by the dates, our campaign must at the very least have added weight to other ones. Anyway, we’re certainly keeping the pressure up. We’re now asking Networkers to keep writing to the Prime Minister, urging him to work for a total, worldwide ban on the production, stockpiling, sale, and use of *all* anti-personnel mines.”

“Come on, John,” wrote one campaigner, R. Whitmore, “Africa’s people are getting poorer. Raise the aid. Cut the debt.”

Constituency contacts

Some of Oxfam’s most effective campaigners are the ones who have opened a direct route from the towns and villages where they live, right into the corridors of power. There are few better ways of helping to create the political will for change than by talking to MPs in the places where they have to listen — their own constituencies.

Prime Ministers, Foreign Secretaries, Chancellors of the Exchequer — all need to show that they care about the concerns of local voters. Any one of their constituents can ask for a meeting or turn up to one of their regular surgeries, and be virtually sure that they will listen. The humblest back-bencher, too, has an ear which is worth bending, and a vested interest in listening to his or her constituents.

Oxfam campaigners have been doing this for years, putting their case informally to their MPs on a huge range of issues, from Cambodia, to overseas aid budgets, to VAT on Oxfam shop donated goods. Because face-to-face discussion is such an effective way of interesting, involving, and convincing people in power, Oxfam is now developing an organised network of constituency contacts.

Each contact (eventually most constituencies will have at least one) undertakes to visit their MP, alone or with a small group, at least twice a year. Bob Hammond, for example, lives in the Nottinghamshire constituency of Rushcliffe. “I visit my MP — currently Kenneth Clarke — at his surgery,” says Bob, “and I usually have 10 to 15 minutes with him. Because of his Cabinet duties, he only holds surgeries once a month, making do with letters at other times. Nevertheless, we have struck up what I regard as a healthy rapport: he listens to what I have to say,

clearly respects the work of Oxfam and responds positively both in our meetings and in correspondence, even when we have to agree to differ over policies being pursued by the government.”

A busy MP, in even the most marginal constituency, will only pay this sort of attention to a well-informed constituent, who has come prepared with carefully marshalled arguments. Twice a year Oxfam produces an *Action Guide*, which contacts can use to supplement the information they are already obtaining from the media.

By its very nature, the contact network is a small-scale operation, but it is a powerful one. It is enabling “the Third World case” to be put to some of the most influential people in the country by people whose views have to matter to them.

Getting in where the action is

“‘You’ve got five minutes, between the Bootleg Beatles and the Saw Doctors,’ they told me. Five minutes, I thought — more like 30 seconds, given the attention span right now of this lot. It was Sunday afternoon after all, so most of them had already been there for three days, absorbing the atmosphere — and who knows what else ... Get it all into the first two minutes, I told myself, or you’ll have lost them.

“So there’s the sun blazing down, and there are 100,000 people *at least* standing sweating in front of me. Then the organisers said ‘You’re on’, and I just boogied on to the stage, spread my arms out wide like Madonna, and yelled into the mike ‘Good afternoon Glastonbury!’

“‘Guess who got the short straw?’ I shouted. ‘I’ve got less than five minutes to talk to you about world poverty. So where on earth do you start? You start with the basics, that’s where you start. Basic rights. With Oxfam’s Campaign for basic rights for people.

“‘Why are they basic? Because they’re things you and I take for granted: enough food, clean water, shelter, a say in your future — simple things like that. Why do we call them rights? Because the world’s governments have agreed to them. Ratified them. Agreed they’re not luxuries but rights. In theory. But one in four people in today’s world lives in absolute poverty.

“‘Basic rights’, I said, ‘are not luxuries — they make the difference between mere survival and really living. You might not want to change your life, and that’s OK. But speak out against injustice. Use your voice, and you can change someone else’s life. Join Oxfam’s campaign for basic rights, and please sign our charter.’

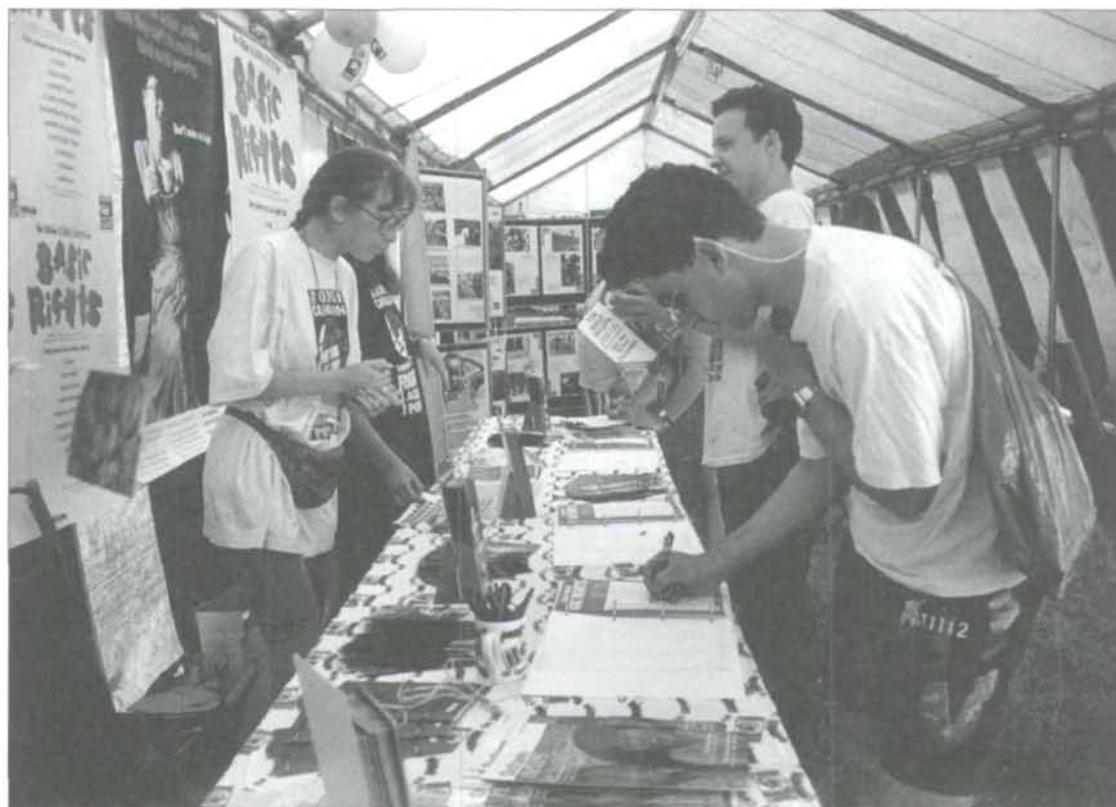
“Well, as I came off the stage, there was this huge cheer, and when I was giving the mike back to the organiser I said ‘Who’s just walked on?’ ‘That was for you,’ they said. I heard

afterwards that people had been coming out saying ‘OK, this Charter I’m signing — where is it?’

“I rang my mum later, and said ‘Mum, I’ve just had 100,000 people at Glastonbury listening to me talking about world poverty. And cheering me.’ My mum’s reaction was: ‘you never stood up in front of 100,000 people when you hadn’t had a shower for three days? — you must have been filthy. What will people think?’ ‘Don’t worry, mum,’ I told her, ‘I was just a tiny distant pinhead to most of them.’ ‘Well maybe’, she said, ‘but did they read your name out?’”

After her spectacular Glastonbury debut, Julie Harrington learnt that 4,000 people had signed the giant Basic Rights Charter in the Oxfam Campaign festival tent.

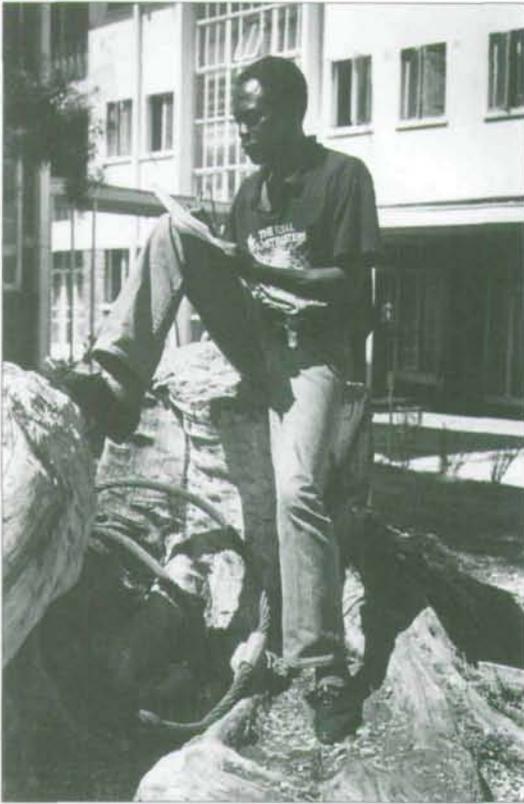
Glastonbury revellers signing Oxfam’s Basic Rights Charter.
photo: Julie Harrington



Influencing the influencers

Joining forces for change

“I knew about our poverty and suffering,” said Solofina Daka, an elderly grandmother. “And we have made enormous efforts to overcome it. But this workshop has opened my eyes fully. The problems we face are not just due to the causes in our own



Enoch Samudengo writing his letter.

photo: Oxfam

villages and among us, but the ones coming from beyond the borders of Zambia.”

Solofina was speaking at a meeting of Oxfam partner organisations in Zambia’s Eastern Province. Like others at the meeting, she was voicing her anger and frustration at the effect on her life of decisions taken far away by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

And, like others there, Solofina resolved that she would be silent and unheard no longer, that she would write to the world’s finance ministers, telling them what the policies of the IMF meant to her in her daily life.

The letter-writing campaign which began at that meeting was taken up in the months that followed by 15,000 other Zambians, as well as by many people in other African countries. Oxfam supported the campaign by providing basic materials, such as pens and stationery pads, and by helping groups to organise meetings at which people could discuss what they wanted to say.

“I don’t think I will ever be employed,” wrote Jones Katongo Bwalya. “When structural adjustment was introduced, we were told it will improve our life, there will be more jobs. All I see is more workers losing jobs. Our lives are becoming nothing short of slavery.”

The visit of Lucy Muyoyeta, Oxfam’s Zambia Representative, to present the letters from Africa to Kenneth Clarke, UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the September 1993 meeting of the IMF was more than a protest about the Fund’s structural adjustment policies: for the first time poor people in Africa were directly addressing the institutions which control their countries’ economies; for the first time, Oxfam was campaigning, not just *for* them, but *with* them.

This massive African initiative has been matched by the efforts of individuals and groups in the UK; the letters from Africa have not been the only ones to reach Kenneth Clarke on the subject of the continent’s debt problem. In fact he received so many letters about debt relief for Uganda that HM Treasury had to get special reply postcards printed. When the matter was brought up in Parliament, MPs referred to massive concern on the matter among their constituents.

The combined persuasion of African and UK campaigners has undoubtedly had its effect on the British government. Kenneth Clarke backed Oxfam’s call for debt relief for Africa at the IMF/World Bank meetings in autumn 1993. In autumn 1994

the leaders of the seven largest industrialised nations (the Group of Seven or G7) agreed to consider more lenient terms for rescheduling and writing off debts owed to them.

Then in early 1995 Western governments agreed to a new debt-reduction package, under which the poorest countries could reduce their debt by two-thirds. It was a welcome initiative, and the first reaction of campaigners was one of jubilation. It looked as if Uganda, the first country to be granted the new terms, was about to have 67 per cent of its vast debt written off. Closer scrutiny, however, showed that the new arrangements still do not, in Oxfam's view, go far enough. Complicated rules, set by creditor governments, mean that debts contracted after a specified date are not eligible for reduction. More importantly, debt owed to the World Bank and the IMF cannot be reduced. In the end only 6 per cent of Uganda's debt was written off.

Nevertheless, the new terms do represent an important step forward. A mere two years previously, Oxfam campaigners had been assured that it was completely crazy even to suggest that debts owed to World Bank and IMF should be reduced. Today, there is widespread acknowledgement among the governments of the G7 nations that action is needed. The 1995 package seems likely to be just the first step of a longer process. More and more, apparently impenetrable institutions like the IMF and World Bank are showing that they are susceptible to public pressure, particularly when it is informed by concrete experience of problems in debtor countries, and applied by people from both rich and poor countries working together.



Lucy Moyoyeta presenting letters from Africa to Kenneth Clarke, in New York for an IMF meeting.

photo: Dennis Brock

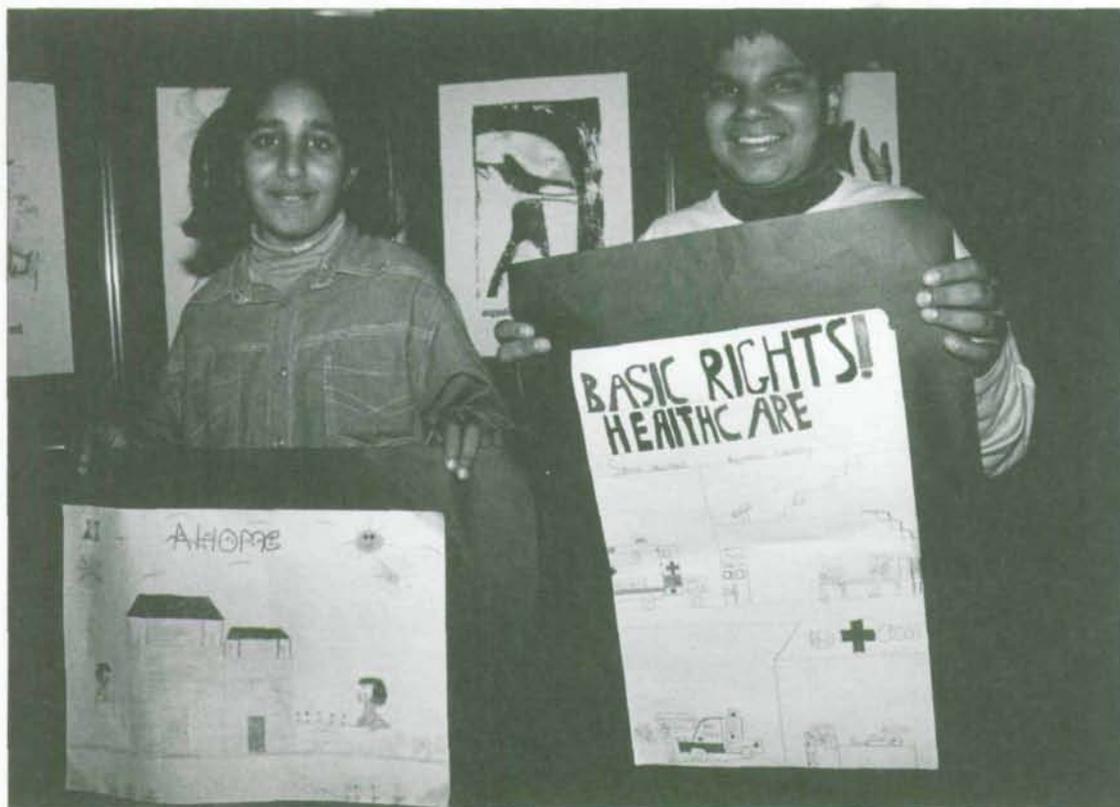
Moving forward — together

Oxfam's Campaign, *Together for Rights, Together against Poverty* is supporting millions of men, women, and children in their struggle to secure the rights they are currently denied, and bring an end to their poverty.

Central to the Campaign is Oxfam's Global Charter for Basic Rights, printed at the beginning of this book. As well as campaigns focusing on particular issues, such as Fair Trade or conflict, Basic Rights Hearings at national, regional, and local levels are aiming to put the whole issue of world poverty back on the moral and political agenda. These hearings are providing

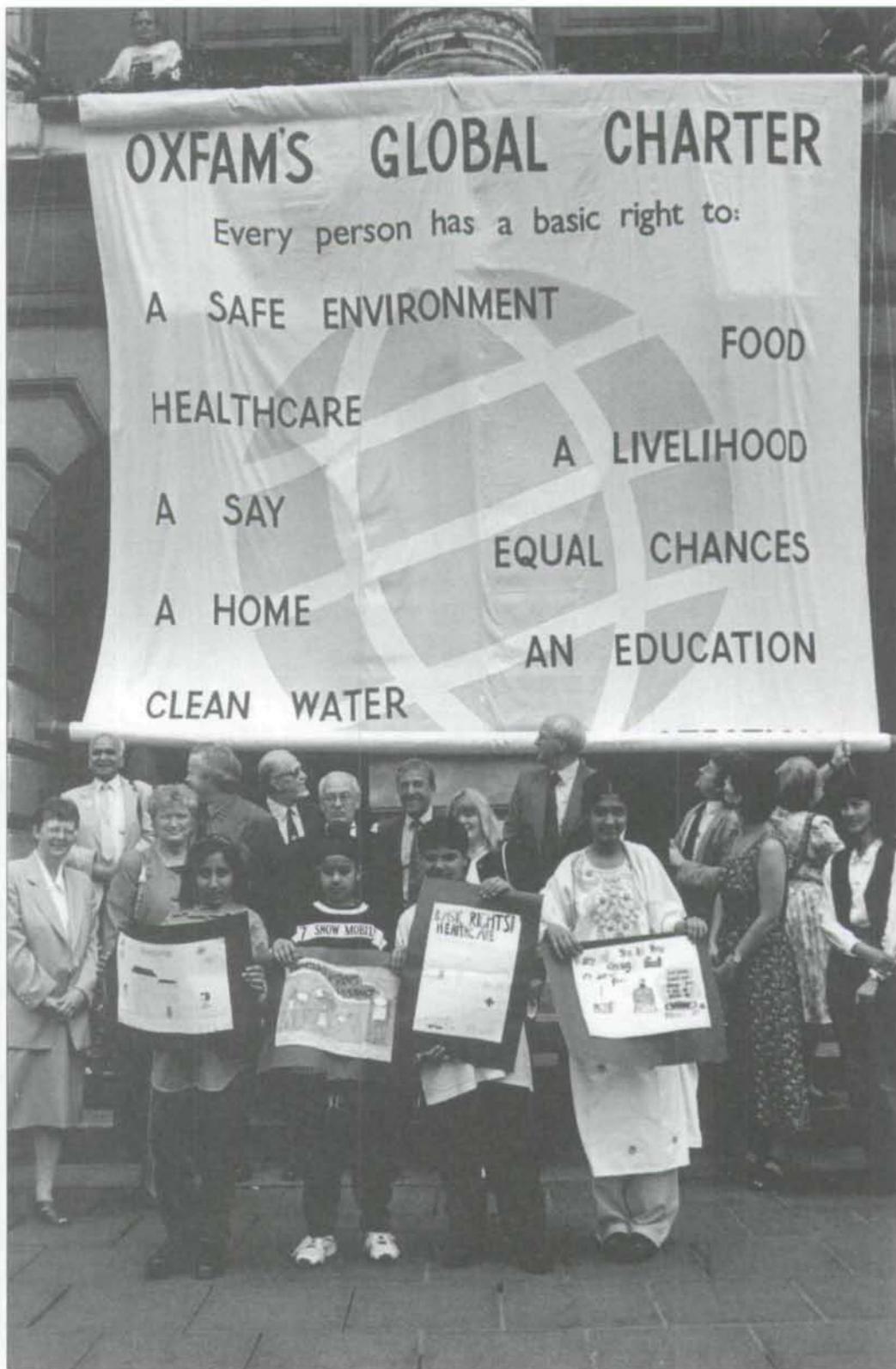
MPs, campaigners, Oxfam staff, and some of the people Oxfam works with overseas, with a unique opportunity to address the need for basic rights, and to consider the consequences for people who are denied them. One end-result of the hearings will be a special report on world poverty, to be presented to the UK Parliament.

"The key message of the Campaign is very simple," says Simon Collings, a member of the co-ordinating group. "What we are saying is that poverty is wrong, and everyone has the responsibility to try to eradicate it. Over the next five years our aim is to make poverty as morally offensive as other human rights atrocities are today."



Above and opposite: Oxfam's Basic Rights Campaign is launched in Nottingham.

photo: Geoff Sayer



OXFAM'S GLOBAL CHARTER

Every person has a basic right to:

- A SAFE ENVIRONMENT
- FOOD
- HEALTHCARE
- A LIVELIHOOD
- A SAY
- EQUAL CHANCES
- A HOME
- AN EDUCATION
- CLEAN WATER

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948.

Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in *fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,*

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realisation of this pledge,

Now, therefore, The General Assembly proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the people of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without

distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11

- 1 Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.
- 2 No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13

- 1 Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.
- 2 Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14

- 1 Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
- 2 This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15

- 1 Everyone has the right to nationality.
- 2 No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16

- 1 Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- 2 Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- 3 The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17

- 1 Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
- 2 No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20

- 1 Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- 2 No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21

- 1 Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- 2 Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.
- 3 The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organisation and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23

- 1 Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

- 2 Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- 3 Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
- 4 Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25

- 1 Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
- 2 Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26

- 1 Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
- 2 Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups,

and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

- 3 Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27

- 1 Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- 2 Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration can be fully realised.

Article 29

- 1 Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.
- 2 In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.
- 3 These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

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