

Programme Impact Report

**Oxfam GB's work with partners and
allies around the world**

July 2005

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Introduction

This report is the culmination of our impact assessment process at the end of 2004–05. It has looked at a selection of programmes being implemented with our partners and allies from around the world. Some programmes reviewed this year have been operating for ten years, and the impact that can be achieved through making a long-term commitment to working with partners and communities is evident. In some programmes, for example our response to the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, it has been important to assess immediate results, but longer-term impact will need to be assessed in years to come. Our campaigning with others is at a critical stage as this report is being produced. The strength of the call to end poverty from people around the world is unprecedented as we approach the 2005 G8 meeting in the UK, the UN Millennium Plus Five Summit and the meeting of WTO members in Hong Kong at the end of 2005. It is difficult to identify precisely the contribution that individual actors make in campaigning when there are so many constituencies and forces at play, but it will be after the crucial international meetings this year that we shall seek to assess what influence Oxfam and its allies have brought to bear.

Whatever the stage of implementation of each programme assessed, we seek to identify the results achieved so far, and what needs to be done differently in future to achieve greater impact. This means that we must identify weaknesses, failures and challenges, as well as successes and strengths. Staff are now more confident to do this as part of our organisation-wide impact assessment process, and this is reflected in some of our reporting this year.

It is important that readers of this report understand what our impact assessment process involves — both its strengths and weaknesses. Much of the analysis in this report is based on participatory assessments led by Oxfam staff, and conducted with partner agencies and the communities involved in the programme. It may be the staff team most closely involved with the programme that leads an assessment, or other Oxfam staff may lead or contribute particular skills. Partners from other programmes, and other stakeholders, may also be involved in the assessments. There were 41 assessments made of individual projects and programmes this year. Staff also prepared short case studies analysing their experience in a number of other programmes. Regional Programme Impact Reports then drew together findings from these assessments, from a number of evaluations that had been conducted, and from on-going monitoring of programmes. A strength of the assessment process comes from the qualitative judgements that communities, partner agencies, and the staff closely involved with programmes make about changes that they experience or see occurring. A weakness is that often we do not have comparative quantitative data from beyond the programmes to help us judge the influence of our interventions alongside other agents of change.

The report looks at a wide range of Oxfam's programme work, but it is only a small selection. While it is sometimes possible to draw conclusions that appear to be relevant across an area of work, at other times we have to be cautious in generalising beyond the findings from an individual programme. This is why we undertake a complementary Strategic Evaluation process, in which we review an area of our work more thoroughly with assistance from external evaluators. We have recently completed a review of our work on conflict reduction, and are currently reviewing our education programme.

This year, we have included longer case studies in the report than before. We hope that this will help staff within Oxfam and other readers gain a clearer understanding of what we are learning in the different areas of our work, and the challenges in different contexts. For readers whose main interest is the case studies, we have listed these for easy reference after the page of Contents.

Finally, in introducing this report, we wish to make several acknowledgements and clarifications:

- Much of the impact described in this report stems from the strength and breadth of the partnerships and alliances in which we work, and from the range of knowledge, skills, and influence that they bring. Where a programme is implemented by, or with, just one or several partners, these organisations are named specifically. However, there are sometimes too many groups involved to name them individually. Similarly, we seldom refer to individual Oxfam

International affiliates in the report, while acknowledging the extent of our collaboration with other Oxfams, especially in major global campaigns, but increasingly in other areas of our work too.

- Wherever the work being analysed in a case study relates to activities funded from a discrete budget or budgets, we have indicated the financial investment made in the programme for a stated period of time. While we feel it is important to make this first step towards providing financial information alongside our reporting of results in individual programmes, it is difficult to provide consistent information across all case studies. First, programmes are at different stages of implementation. Second, there will be other resources contributed by Oxfam, our partners and communities, which are not represented in financial terms. Third, we may not have captured other financial resources that our partners receive independently from other donors, and which contribute indirectly to the results being reported. We have not acknowledged the individual donors that have supported Oxfam to undertake these programmes with partners, but we wish to acknowledge their contributions.
- We report against each of Oxfam's five rights-based programme Aims. There are nine Strategic Change Objectives under these aims. One of these is that 'ethnic, cultural and other groups oppressed or marginalised for reasons of their identity will enjoy equal rights and status with other people'. We have not reported specifically against this Strategic Change Objective this year, because we mainly address the denial of poor people's right to have their opinions heard, and exclusion on the basis of identity, through our Right to be Heard programmes. Specifically, related to diversity, we continue to support indigenous and minority ethnic groups to strengthen their voice, and we support the disability movement in some areas. We also seek to engage more closely with black and minority ethnic communities in Britain.

Overview

‘Before.....we were sitting in our houses with only a skirt without a top, waiting ‘til cooking time for what might be provided by our husbands. My first child did not go to school because of school fees....I now have an acre of rice and another plot planted with tomatoes, and I am able to sustain myself, pay my other children’s school fees, and eat well.’

Affamah Asariga, Chairperson of the Basket Weavers’ Association of Nyariga, Ghana, and a member of the producers’ network, MAPRONET, that is supporting its members to develop their small enterprises.

‘Children enjoy the Child Centred Methodology (CCM) lessons very much and they become noticeably more confident. If we were not motivated by the good effects of using CCM on our pupils’ learning and characters, we could not be enthusiastic to study and practise CCM as much as possible in our class.’

Mr Hoang, a teacher of Grade 1 in Long Vinh B school, Duyen Hai District, Tra Vinh Province, Viet Nam and in Oxfam’s Education Programme in Duyen Hai District, Viet Nam.

‘Nowadays, I know what the channels are; where I can demand my rights and fight for improvements in the community. Today I have information.... we have rights and we are citizens.’

Mrs Claudia Alves Clementino, 31, moved to Rio Branca city, Brazil, 11 years ago searching for better opportunities. She is participating in Oxfam’s programme, which supports poor citizens in urban areas to engage with government policy processes.

The Play Fair at the Olympics campaign was ‘perhaps the biggest-ever crusade against sweatshop’.

The Economist, 19 August 2004.

We have started this Overview with some examples of what people say about our programmes. In our assessments, we listen in particular to the views of people experiencing poverty who have been involved in programmes, who tell us what they feel has changed in their lives. The assessments of others who are involved in programmes, our partner agencies and outside commentators, are also important.

What changes have Oxfam and its partners and allies contributed to, and what types of intervention are we finding effective? What are the main challenges we are facing in our programme? How are we progressing in areas of our work that we identified last year as requiring development? Are there other areas that we now feel we need to develop?

We shall address these questions in this Overview, which summarises what we have learned from our impact assessment process this year.

1 Highlights of achievements

This year’s Programme Impact Report presents case studies from a number of programmes, in order to illustrate what is being achieved and also to begin to explore how change is occurring. Here we summarise highlights of achievements described in some of the case studies, and achievements of other programmes mentioned in the full report. Most of the highlights also illustrate the types of

intervention and the types of factor that we judge have contributed to change in various contexts, and to progress towards particular objectives.

1.1 Saving lives, protecting and re-establishing livelihoods

Since the **Indian Ocean tsunami** on 26 December 2004, Oxfam GB and its partners have assisted 600,000 people.¹ The immediate priority was to provide basic relief items and access to water and sanitation, before assisting communities to begin to re-establish their livelihoods and re-build homes. Making cash payments to people involved in programme activities (for instance, repairing roads), and supporting income-generating activities (for instance, community groups producing clothes) is accelerating the process of recovery for communities.

In Darfur, western Sudan, and in neighbouring Chad, Oxfam and its partners have met the public-health needs of 750,000 women, men, girls, and boys who have fled their homes because of the **conflict in Darfur**.

During the serious **floods in Bangladesh** in 2004, boats that communities had acquired through Oxfam's River Basin Programme were used to rescue more than 1,000 people, their livestock, and some of their belongings. Over a period of more than ten years, communities have been assisted to develop flood shelters, raise their homesteads, adapt their farming, acquire resources, and improve early-warning systems, to help to save lives and protect their livelihoods at times of flood.

1.2 Supporting people to resolve basic needs, acquire resources, and gain power in markets

In Oxfam's **livelihoods programme in the Shire Highlands of Malawi**, 37,000 poor women and men farmers have increased their production of maize, their staple crop, by more than 200 per cent since adopting low-cost, environment-friendly agricultural practices. Twelve thousand households affected by HIV are receiving **care** in their homes from volunteers, supported by Oxfam's partners; and, through Oxfam's collaboration with Médecins sans Frontières, people can be referred for counselling and treatment. As a result, some children have been able to go back to school, and some chronically sick women and men have been able to work in their fields, do light work at home, or start activities to raise income. The community structures that have been established by the programme are helping to ensure that the most vulnerable members of communities are included in development activities, and are identified for support during the 'lean' season of the year. The example set by the community volunteers has encouraged others to become involved, and has encouraged greater collaboration between traditional leaders and communities, in responding to the needs of orphans and, more generally, to the needs of HIV-affected people.

The 15,600 members of the **producers' network, MAPRONET, in Ghana** have been able to increase sales of their products by, on average, 35 per cent since they joined the network. Families of members are better able to meet their basic needs now. Membership of MAPRONET is helping women and men to develop the skills and resources that they need for their economic enterprises, to acquire a stronger voice by working together in their producer groups, and to take part in advocacy activities.

For a number of years, Oxfam² has supported **coffee farmers**, for example in Haiti, Honduras, Peru, and Ethiopia, in the development of co-operatives and networks; improvements in production, including organic production; entry into markets, including Fairtrade and organic markets; and advocacy and campaigning skills to strengthen their voice. The establishment of the Global Alliance on Commodities and Coffee (GLACC) at the beginning of Oxfam's global campaigning on coffee in 2002 has strengthened their voice further. Nineteen national networks of coffee organisations are now members of GLACC, which represents small-scale producers within the major global initiatives that are seeking to resolve the coffee crisis. Over time, coffee farmers in many co-operatives and

¹ Oxfam International affiliates together with partners reached 1.1 million people in seven countries during the first three months of 2005.

² Oxfam GB and other Oxfam International affiliates.

associations have been able to gain better returns in the market. In Honduras, for example, the 10,000 members of the Central de Co-operativas Cafetaleras de Honduras (CCCH) have achieved the highest unit price for coffee among 21 exporters in the country, and sales worth US\$5.3m during the past coffee year.

1.3 Improving the quality of education, changing entrenched ideas about girls' roles and their need for education

In our **education programme in Viet Nam**, active-learning methods were introduced initially in a selection of primary schools in Duyen Hai District. Children's learning has improved, and this has provided not only encouragement to the teachers involved, but a good example for others. With continued support, the methods are now being used across the district, and the Tra Vinh Department of Education and Training is committed to introducing the methods throughout the Province. Nationally, the Ministry of Education and Training has reformed the curriculum and textbooks to include child-centred methods.

In our **West Africa education programme**, local women employed as *animatrices* in Niger and Mali are helping to change the attitudes of parents about girls' early marriage and their need for education. In the community schools established by Oxfam's programme, 49 per cent of the 1,832 children enrolled in 2003–04 were girls. Support for parents' associations and school management committees in all our education programmes in Africa is also helping to tackle entrenched ideas about the value of girls in society and their need for education.

1.4 Addressing gender discrimination

Our international campaign entitled *Trading Away Our Rights*, focusing on the precarious nature of women's work in international supply chains, is challenging and influencing attitudes within governments and companies about gender equality and women's rights. In nine of the 15 countries where there is national campaigning, labour regulations have been strengthened. In several of these countries, there are shifts in employers' compliance with labour laws.

The issue of **gender-based violence in the Dominican Republic** is receiving a greater degree of public attention; institutions are becoming more aware of women's rights; and more women who have suffered violence are receiving support to change their situation. The programme has supported campaigning, training for professional groups, and the development of services. For example, 3,000 women have received support from Emotional and Legal Support Units supported by Oxfam's programme; 755 women have been assisted to take complaints through the legal process; and 194 have obtained protection orders.

In the first **local-government elections in Sierra Leone** since 1972, 58 women were elected as councillors, out of a national total of 465 elected representatives. Oxfam's partner, The 50/50 Group, provided training for prospective women candidates and others who supported their candidature. Of the 58 women elected, 53 had participated in 50/50's training programme.

In the **UK**, Oxfam supported the Manchester Women's Network to undertake a gender audit to explore differences between the engagement of women and men in local regeneration processes. The results '*opened the minds*' of staff in the statutory agencies, and the audit methodology will be highlighted as an example of good practice on the UK government website www.renewal.net/.

1.5 Promoting the participation of citizens in shaping public policies and holding institutions to account

In our **urban programme in Brazil**, women and men living in shantytowns are being supported to understand their rights and actively engage in seeking to influence government policies. Our partners are playing a crucial role in strengthening the opportunities for citizens to participate in the development of Master Plans for eight cities. A campaign 'For a Participatory Master Plan' in one city

succeeded in re-opening discussions. As a result of this experience, the Ministry of Cities has decided to implement a National Campaign for the Implementation of Participatory Master Plans, based on the campaign designed by our partner.

In Oxfam's **livelihoods and markets programme in Honduras**, training community leaders in planning, advocacy, and management has helped to facilitate more constructive engagement between government and citizens' groups. Transparency commissions have been set up to undertake social audits of municipal funds. Local Community Development Committees requested funds amounting to US\$555,100 from central government for projects prioritised by the communities, which would benefit 4,500 people. The Committees are monitoring the implementation of 21 such projects, and another 56 proposals are waiting to be cleared.

In **Yemen**, Oxfam has worked with both local civil-society organisations (CSOs) and the government on the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process. At community level, as poor women and men learned about their rights in the context of the PRSP, they started demanding actions to reduce poverty, and Oxfam's partners have managed to mobilise US\$1.5m from various sources for rehabilitation of water sources, schools, health centres, and rural roads. CSOs have come together in networks in 10 districts, and nationally a CSOs' Thematic Working Group, with representatives from the 21 governorates, has been established as part of the monitoring mechanism for the PRSP. In an important initiative, the Group has drafted a 'shadow report' in parallel to the first PRSP Annual Progress Report. Gender-equality issues are also gradually gaining greater recognition by the government and the ruling political party: Oxfam has worked closely with the government on these issues, offering technical support but also making constructive criticisms at times.

Groups of **indigenous peoples in Bolivia** have gained title to their territories, and legislative change has established their rights in relation to the planning operations of extractive industries in their territories. By pursuing complaints about the damage done by mining activities, communities have received compensation payments amounting to US\$2.3m; further compensation payments are being negotiated; and mining operations affecting 28 communities have been halted. Strong leadership within the indigenous groups and uniting in strong alliances have been crucial to the gains they have made.

1.6 A global movement for change, shifting the terms of debate

Working alongside many others, Oxfam has contributed to the significant growth in campaigning to end poverty that can be seen in the South and North. The resulting influence varies in different contexts, but shifts are occurring in the position of governments and other institutions on our key campaigning priorities.

In the **UK**, the government has made positive shifts in policy on debt, aid, trade, and arms control in the last year. The government made a commitment to increase its overseas aid to 0.7 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product by 2013, and is now contributing to the Fast Track Initiative for financing education. The UK Foreign Secretary announced that the UK would take a lead in building international support for a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty. UK government policy on trade has become significantly more development-focused; however, it is shifts in the EU position in WTO trade negotiations that are now needed. The **EU** made a commitment last year to work towards ending export subsidies. The WTO's rulings that some US cotton subsidies and EU sugar subsidies are illegal were also important victories for developing countries, which will significantly influence the process of reforming farm subsidies in the **USA and EU**.

About 80 per cent of the seven million people who have now signed Oxfam's global **Big Noise** petition to *Make Trade Fair* live in the South. Two million people in Ethiopia signed the petition during a campaign that focused on the global coffee crisis.

The **Play Fair at the Olympics** campaign was launched in March 2004 by the International Confederation of Trade Unions, the Clean Clothes Campaign, and Oxfam. More than 500,000 people from 35 countries signed a petition, and about 500 local demonstrations and other events took place over the six months leading up to the 2004 Olympics in Athens. This promoted extensive coverage of

the issues in the media. Five out of the seven companies targeted have reviewed their codes of practice and labour policies. Four have begun to address the issue of freedom of association of workers. As already mentioned, our *Trading Away our Rights* campaign has led to a number of governments strengthening their labour regulations, and to shifts in companies' compliance with labour laws.

Extensive civil-society campaigning in Southern countries calling for pro-poor development during negotiations of **US regional trade agreements** has helped Southern governments to be more assertive. Negotiations on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) have now halted, and a fall-back strategy to put in place US–Andean country FTAs has also run into difficulties.

Millions of people in more than 100 countries took part in the **Global Campaign for Education's Week of Action** in April 2005, and high-level politicians, including 12 heads of State, were engaged in debate about the issues. Senior politicians 'went back to school', and 'cut-out friends' were delivered to decision makers by children and young people, with the message 'Send my Friend to School'.

More than 250,000 supporters from 152 countries have taken campaign actions as part of the **Control Arms Campaign**, led by Oxfam, Amnesty International, and IANSA (the International Action Network on Small Arms). Eleven governments, including the UK, have given explicit support for an Arms Trade Treaty, and support for tougher control on arms transfers also came from the UN Secretary General and his High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, the UN Security Council, and the Commission for Africa. In West Africa, Oxfam and IANSA are pressing for the ECOWAS Moratorium on arms transfers to be made legally binding, and Oxfam has worked actively with others in the development of a draft treaty. In the Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa, we have worked with governments to strengthen arms-transfer controls, and the development of guidelines for arms transfers, which will be the key implementation document for the Nairobi Protocol, a new legally binding arms-control instrument in the region.

Oxfam's Pan-Africa programme supported the Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) in seeking the ratification, popularisation, and implementation of the **African Union (AU) Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa**. When the campaign began, only one country, Comoros, had ratified the Protocol. One year later, ten countries have done so.

Finally, the scale and breadth of the alliances that have come together under the banners of **Make Poverty History** and the **Global Call to Action Against Poverty** are unprecedented. There is a powerful call for change in the lead-up to the key G8 summit, the UN Millennium Plus Five summit, and the Hong Kong meeting of WTO members, all scheduled to take place before the end of 2005.

2 Lessons and challenges

A number of lessons and challenges emerge from our impact assessment process this year. In many instances, they relate to, and build on, the ten areas that we identified as 'The Way Forward' in our Programme Impact Report last year. We shall therefore make reference to these areas as we introduce this year's lessons and challenges, following which we will suggest areas for programme development.

2.1 Programme analysis and strategy

2.1.1 An integrated global programme

The importance of integrated analysis and strategising across our Aims is raised in a variety of ways in our impact assessments. There are positive examples of integrated approaches that are considered to have contributed to the effectiveness and sustainability of the changes achieved, helping to ensure that programme interventions 'reach the poorest'. Assessments also show where broader, more strategic interventions are required by us and others.

Last year we said that ‘humanitarian’ and ‘development’ labels need to be questioned, especially in some countries in Africa where recurrent droughts and HIV/AIDS, together with a range of other social, economic, environmental, and political factors, are changing the face of poverty. We identified specifically the need to get better at sharing learning between programmes in order to improve our practice in integrating livelihood and humanitarian work. Several assessments this year provide us with lessons from long-standing programmes and newer initiatives that are being taken.

The assessment of our livelihoods programme in Malawi (mentioned in Highlights of Achievements) describes how new partnerships and community structures are helping to ensure that the most vulnerable households — including households affected by HIV — receive the support that they need to participate in development activities and to cope during the ‘lean’ season of the year. Livelihoods programmes (e.g. in Zimbabwe and Zambia) and humanitarian programmes (e.g. in Haiti and in countries affected by the tsunami in the Indian Ocean) are providing humanitarian assistance in ways that protect and stimulate local markets — by, for instance, organising fairs where purchases can be made with vouchers, by using cash-for-work schemes, and by promoting local production and marketing of seeds. We saw the advantages of involving development-programme staff, working in areas of chronic vulnerability, in making food-security assessments, as happens in our Kenya programme. In the Red Sea State, north Sudan, our Community Situation Indicator system has been managed by a separate team, and has proved to be less effective for a number of reasons.

In our ‘right to be heard’ work, experience from Honduras and Nicaragua, for example, suggests that the effectiveness of programmes is likely to be increased when we focus ‘right to be heard’ interventions in the same locations as other programme work, especially on the development of livelihoods. Assessments from our Malawi livelihoods programme and Mozambique education programme illustrate how impact and the sustainability of developments can be enhanced when programmes include education on rights, and support poor people to engage in local policy making and civic responsibilities (such as service on school councils). An increasing number of country programmes, for example Peru and the UK, are now reporting that they are shifting towards greater integration of their ‘right to be heard’ work with other programmes.

The Strategic Review of our Conflict Reduction Programme across the world concluded that our most effective programmes have been those in which conflict-reduction and peace-building objectives are pursued alongside work to achieve other objectives, such as secure livelihoods, good governance, and gender equality.

Some assessments of education programmes highlighted on-going challenges to the attendance of children, especially girls, at school in areas of chronic poverty — where children are involved in the family’s struggle to collect water, farm in an impoverished environment, generate some income, and, increasingly, cope with the effects of HIV. Initiatives including scholarship programmes, the employment of local women as *animatrices*, and support for households affected by HIV are all important in increasing girls’ attendance. However, complementary investments (by us or others) in livelihoods development and access to water (which support all children’s full and continued opportunities for learning) are not consistent across our various education-programme areas.

Some of the lessons and challenges that have been raised here will be considered further in later sections of this Overview.

2.1.2 Shifting attitudes on women’s rights

Last year we said that we must ensure that we consistently hold ourselves accountable, internally and externally, on promoting gender equality in our work, ensuring that staff have the support they need to develop their practice. We feel that we are making good progress in this. However, we also recognise that individual projects do not usually involve actions that would promote wide change in gender equality. Projects may, for example, successfully support women to take on new economic activities and roles within their community, or may help girls to attend school, but how far are they influencing relationships and roles within the home, or in society, beyond the areas of programme intervention? The evaluation of the programme in Sierra Leone, which supported women to stand as candidates in

the local government elections, found that the men interviewed were generally in favour of women being accepted as leaders, but treated the idea of equality within the home with contempt and derision. In our education programme in Niger, the assessment found that women are very aware of the potential of education to provide them and their daughters with skills to operate economic enterprises; but it was not evident that they recognised the potential of education to promote changes in other areas of their life.

We know that a step-change in approach is needed by us and others if gender inequalities are to be addressed in a fundamental way. There are entrenched ideas and beliefs within households, and in institutions at all levels of society, which sustain gender inequalities. In the '*We Can*' Campaign to End Violence Against Women in South Asia, launched with our partners in the last year, we are beginning to take a more strategic approach on one aspect of women's rights. The campaign seeks to change social attitudes that accept violence as normal, aiming to mobilise all sections of the family, community, and State to eliminate gender-based violence. There will be much for us to learn from this campaign.

2.1.3 'Reaching the poorest'

As noted above, increased attention to integrated analysis and strategising across our Aims has arisen partly because we are asking ourselves questions about who is benefiting from development activities, and who is being excluded.

Other lessons and challenges have emerged in relation to specific areas of our programme. For example, in our programmes to develop the power of poor producers in markets, our assessments identify cases where programme strategies and deliberate actions by communities are helping to ensure that enterprise development projects benefit all. For instance, in a mussel-raising project that we support in Viet Nam, the club leaders and local government staff realised that the poorer households were not participating in the project, or were not benefiting as much from it as better-off households; they responded with a training programme and changes in arrangements for guarding the mussel fields which made it easier for poor households headed by women to participate. In Albania, with the development of a herb collectors' association that we support, a variety of jobs has been created, and the strong sense of community in the villages has brought women, men, and young people into the enterprise; women are taking on jobs in processing and earning income, whereas they have traditionally carried out manual agricultural activities. In this and other producers' associations supported by the programme in Albania, part of the profits from enterprises is being used to benefit village communities (e.g. improving drinking water, irrigation, or health facilities).

A major challenge encountered in our livelihoods and markets programmes is the widespread lack of appropriate financial services for people living in poverty. They are either excluded from taking the first step of obtaining credit and saving, or they are unable to access large enough loans to be able to build their production and marketing operations to a sufficient size to be able to negotiate fair terms in the market. We are also still learning about how best to support poor producers to gain access to the range of business services that they require alongside micro-finance services. In Georgia, where we are supporting the development of micro-finance and business support for poor producers, it has been a priority for our partner to become a sustainable institution. During the initial years of its development, the micro-finance products that it has managed to provide have not been able to target the poorest members of communities directly, although employment opportunities have grown as small enterprises have grown. A priority now for our partner is to grow as an organisation, in order to be able to extend the scope of its portfolio of products and bring in poorer clients.

Although some Regions are developing experience in micro-finance provisions, as an organisation we have not invested for some time in exploring new thinking and ways forward to promote appropriate models of financial services for people living in poverty. This is an area where greater advocacy is also called for.

In our work on power in markets, each programme must be clear about who is being targeted, who is being reached, how we envisage that the most vulnerable members of communities will benefit, and whether inequalities are being reduced or increased.

2.1.4 Shifting power relations

Although assessments identified cases where poor people felt that they now had some influence as citizens in policy-making processes, we are aware of the challenges that continue to be posed by the unequal power held by different people within networks, multi-stakeholder forums, and partnerships, and the effects of such imbalances on the quality and value of participation. Our Ghana programme found that the presence of advocacy NGOs in the MAPRONET network (mentioned in Highlights of Achievements) was constraining the empowerment of poor producer representatives. In the UK, our programme team reflected on the power dynamics within several anti-poverty networks that we support. The team saw that genuine participation of all parties can occur only if network members create an environment that really levels the balance of power between those living in poverty, the decision makers, and the implementers of anti-poverty initiatives.

The shift that we have seen in a number of Regions to working at a local-government level on citizens' participation in policy-making processes follows on from widespread frustration with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper processes in many countries, where campaigners have been disappointed by the limitations of the participation process, and the narrowness of the plans that have emerged. Staff are recognising the benefits of working with both local authorities and communities, to raise awareness about rights and duties, and to strengthen systems for accountability. Importantly, by working at this level, poor people can often see their representations lead to tangible changes which benefit their communities. While we continue to work at local, national, and international levels on policy-making processes, linking work at different levels is proving to be a challenge. Lack of political will, inefficient government processes, and lack of access to information and data are all challenges that we face as we seek to extend poor citizens' power in relation to policy making and the delivery of services that affect their lives.

For genuine participation and shifts in the balance of power, all parties in multi-stakeholder forums need to be open to change. We recognise that this includes Oxfam. We can be a powerful actor in the contexts in which we work, and we act as part of social-change processes. As our Rights, Inclusion, and Development programme in Peru has concluded, *'If you want change, you must be open to change; you must change yourself'*.

2.2 Mobilising Oxfam's resources and collaborating with others

In both our humanitarian work and our campaigning, we have demonstrated our ability to collaborate and act effectively across our global organisation to scale up the impact that we can achieve. Our extensive engagement in alliances is emphasised in the Highlights section of this report. Here we shall consider some of the lessons and challenges that we face.

2.2.1 Humanitarian scale-up

Oxfam — like other organisations — was challenged last year by the succession of large-scale humanitarian crises in the world. Reflecting on response to the conflict in Darfur, western Sudan, we saw that we were slow to draw effectively on the resources of the organisation and scale-up our work to deliver the large and effective response that later emerged. By contrast, our response to the tsunami in the Indian Ocean has been truly an organisation-wide effort. Arguably, what we had learned from recent painful experiences in our response in Darfur and Chad contributed to this achievement.

Drawing on what we have learned from our responses last year, we have compiled a Humanitarian Investment Plan. It focuses on creating the right internal climate and levels of competence to improve Oxfam's performance over the coming year. This work will include reviewing Oxfam's standard

operating procedures in major emergencies, in order to streamline finance, logistics, and systems. Across the whole organisation, we shall be building on the increased confidence that we achieved last year in a number of areas of our response.

Oxfam International's Humanitarian Consortium continues to gain experience as affiliates decide how we can best respond to major emergencies using our joint resources; but there is still some way to go to strengthen the effectiveness of our collaboration.

2.2.2 Campaigning alliances and partnerships

Last year we said that we would continue to develop our experience in choosing the most appropriate range of campaign strategies in particular situations, being clear about our objectives on each occasion and identifying the potential for change – while always being true to our principle of ensuring that the voices of poor women and men are heard. As alliances grow ever wider, and Southern campaigning expands, this remains a fundamental issue for us: we need to carry on debating with partners and allies, in order to ensure the effectiveness of our collaboration in each situation.

We continue to innovate, and support others to innovate, in campaigning. For instance, we have successfully reached out to new audiences, including young people, by popularising messages on key campaign issues. An example of this is the series of photographs of celebrities with agricultural produce 'dumped' on them; these attracted broad media coverage. Some partners in the South have brought together a range of constituencies to campaign on the same issue for the first time. For example, the *Trading Away our Rights* campaign in Colombia involves trade unions and organisations dedicated to development, human rights, or women's issues. The global *Big Noise* petition has been linked to national issues of major concern and to on-going programme priorities in a number of countries in the South — for example, coffee in Ethiopia and agriculture in Albania; as a result, the petition has become part of a process of supporting partners to develop new skills and confidence to take part in campaigning, and raising awareness on global trading issues.

As we promote and support Southern campaigning, we are aware of the challenges for our partner agencies and poor citizens in different contexts. Campaigning is often new for our partners; where there are repressive regimes, the risks that people take in campaigning can be considerable; and people with precarious livelihoods may be justifiably fearful of claiming their rights and making demands on those who buy their products and pay their wages. Partners not only want support to develop their skills in campaigning: they also gain strength through the involvement of international NGOs in their campaigns. Many partners will need long-term support in order to turn early successes in mobilising people and short-term actions into effective on-going programmes, and to realise their right to association and to have their voices heard. At the same time, in our collaboration with Southern partners, we need to ensure that they are supported to develop into strong, sustainable, and independent campaigning alliances.

The number of people and the breadth of constituencies now campaigning across the world, especially with the coming together of the *Make Poverty History* and the *Global Call to Action Against Poverty* alliances, are unprecedented, and a powerful force for change. Whatever the decisions reached at the G8 meeting in July 2005, there will be more money for development available globally. We need to plan ahead with allies to keep up the strength of the campaign, through to the delivery of funds and actions to overcome poverty, considering what support different constituencies need in order to stay involved as debates become more technical. We also need to explore how to convince even more people that poverty is the key political challenge of our generation.

Across our programme work, we are seeking to explore how social change happens, and the relationships and strategies that will help us to maximise the contribution that we can make through our resources to ending poverty. Inevitably, civil-society actors differ, sometimes fundamentally, in their analysis of the best ways to achieve change, and therefore they have differing views on campaign messages and strategy. It is important to keep challenging one another about the potential, and actual, impact of our strategies on poor people. It is also important to understand where different

analyses and strategies are complementary, and where they are weakening the effectiveness and efficiency of coalitions.

Within our own alliance of Oxfam affiliates, we have continued to strengthen our capacity to work effectively together, drawing on our combined resources, skills, and constituencies, and building our capacity in key countries. All our global campaigns are undertaken as Oxfam International.

3 Areas of programme development

How will we take forward the lessons of our impact assessment? Several initiatives related to some of the issues raised are already in place or planned. Regions and Departments will also work on the issues in their on-going processes of building the quality and impact of programmes.

3.1 Scaling up and spreading impact

Over the past few years, our programmes have become more strategic, working to address the impacts of poverty both directly and through strategies to shift policies, practices, ideas, and beliefs that sustain poverty. But in many areas of our work, the challenges of poverty are so great that we believe we must work with others to ‘think bigger’.

Several initiatives have started in the past year and are moving us forward towards more ambitious programming, designed to respond to needs that we identified in ‘The Way Forward’ last year. We said then that we would invest in support for programme staff, to help them to learn from the good ideas and practices within and beyond Oxfam, in order to scale up and spread the impact that we can have. We said that we should identify a few key innovations in which Oxfam will invest to ensure that they have wider impact. We also said that we needed a clear strategy to apply good practice in HIV/AIDS mainstreaming on a wider scale.

Developments underway include the following:

- Our Southern Africa Region and Horn, East and Central Africa Region are involved in an initiative, supported by our Humanitarian Department and Campaigns and Policy Division, which seeks to develop the way in which we operate in areas of chronic vulnerability. Within this initiative, we are carrying out in-depth livelihood assessments, developing early-warning systems for food insecurity, and developing livelihoods programmes which have the capacity to respond to acute needs in crises.
- Our Southern Africa Region is leading in developing our thinking and strategy in response to HIV/AIDS. We have recognised that not only do we need to scale up what we are doing through mainstreaming activities, but also we should extend the scope of our interventions. We have recognised that we need to think differently about programming — working with others across sectors, understanding systems, and thinking on a much bigger scale than we are accustomed to. New programmes have now been designed in all countries in our Southern Africa Region, and we are increasing the capacity of the global HIV team, based in our Southern Africa region, in order to improve the speed at which we can pursue our scaling up, and the quality of this work.
- Scale-up initiatives are progressing in Honduras, Ethiopia, and India to seek to demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of developing small-scale agriculture for national poverty reduction. This is a long-term project to develop our own practice and provide evidence for advocacy and campaigning.
- Our Humanitarian Investment Plan has already been mentioned. As an organisation we want to ensure that we play our full role as a humanitarian actor, both by improving our own response and by increasing our impact through advocacy and campaigning.
- Some individual country programmes have also started developing more ambitious, strategic programmes.

Other developments are still at an early stage:

- Discussion has started within Oxfam International to identify possible actions of a magnitude different from that of our current efforts, in order to contribute to achieving global shifts on women's rights.
- An action plan is being drawn up to take forward the learning and recommendations from our strategic review of our work on conflict reduction.

3.2 The quality of public-sector services

Last year we said that we needed to define our strategy on public-sector services and undertake pilot initiatives which would identify the best ways to influence the use of the global funds already available and help us to identify responses to HIV/AIDS that could be widely applied.

We completed the research started the previous year, and the findings are already being used in developing our programme policy, and in advocacy work within the MDG Campaign, on the World Bank/IMF spring meetings 2005, and on the forthcoming UN Millennium Plus Five Summit. They are also being used to strengthen our basic social-services programmes, helping us to develop programmes where experience at community level will support delivery of better-quality services nationally. The Mozambique case study from the research project has been used to develop the model for a new HIV/AIDS programme in this country.

3.3 Working with the private sector

Last year we said we would continue to explore the best ways of drawing on the business skills and resources of the private sector to benefit poor producers' enterprises. We have now significantly expanded our engagement with international companies, with a variety of objectives: to facilitate economic links between companies and poor producers; to provide access to business services for producer groups and civil-society organisations; to change industry practices; and to develop the international market for fairly and ethically traded goods. Most of these engagements began quite recently, and we have much to learn about what contributes to effective collaboration and what hinders it. Research and analysis also continues to give us a better understanding of how the private sector can contribute to pro-poor development, and through our campaigning we aim to hold specific companies to account for their part in perpetuating poverty and inequality.

3.4 Accountability in development

Last year we identified actions to be taken to strengthen our own accountability and that of others.

- Accountability of donors and recipient governments. We said that we would increase support for national programme staff and partners to develop and refine national influencing strategies, to turn government policy commitments into actions that bring tangible and widespread improvements for poor people. We said we would also increase attention paid to the accountability of donors, through a campaign on the Millennium Development Goals.

Our analysis this year confirms that there remain significant challenges in developing our programmes to address issues of power in policy-making processes across different levels and in some very challenging political contexts. Programme staff have continued to share experiences in this area of our work over the last year. These have included a project with INTRAC and a workshop to share learning on our 'capacity building for empowerment' theme. This will remain an important area for learning and innovation.

The accountability of donors is now high on international agendas, through the work of all the organisations involved in Make Poverty History and the Global Call to Action Against Poverty.

- Good humanitarian donorship. Last year we said that we would seek new approaches to achieve appropriate levels of humanitarian assistance and protection for people in the many neglected crises around the world. This remains an important area of concern and attention for us, as levels of global humanitarian aid in 2004 were lower than in 2003, and no more equitably distributed. The initiative for Good Humanitarian Donorship that Oxfam has supported has not yet had a measurable impact on this trend. After the Indian Ocean tsunami, Oxfam called for donors to make a so-called ‘double humanitarian pledge’, but there is little evidence yet that the unprecedented public generosity after the tsunami has leveraged additional government resources for other humanitarian crises.
- The accountability of NGOs. Last year we said we would establish what we consider to be good practices concerning our own accountability to partners and to poor people. This work has been taken forwards, with staff in various parts of Oxfam seeking to establish a clear set of partnership principles and accountability mechanisms. Our UK Poverty Programme has worked with partners to explore a set of minimum standards for participation. Our involvement in the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership – International is also providing important lessons. As a rights-based organisation, we must enshrine principles of participation and transparency in all our relationships, and understand the factors that can undermine these principles. Strengthening our own practice in this respect remains a priority for us.

3.5 Learning about social-change processes

A number of teams have been seeking to understand better how social change happens, as a basis for developing our strategy in various areas of our work. We are analysing what is effective in our current programmes — and this is important — but also seeking to open our minds to new ways of thinking and theories of change. As we enter into new types of partnership, for example with large companies, we need to understand how our own values and theories of change shape what we do, and understand the motivations and interests of other actors in social-change processes, and their beliefs about how change does and can happen. As we seek to contribute to changing entrenched ideas and beliefs that keep women and men living in poverty, we need new understandings and new ways of working. We shall continue to learn from one another within Oxfam and with others as we carry on renewing our analysis and strategies to make our programmes more effective.

Impact Reports by Aim

1 The right to gender equity

The changes that we want to see in the world

Within this Aim, we focus on achieving equal rights for women and men, acting on our understanding that poverty affects women and men differently, and that the majority of people living in poverty and suffering are women. We work towards gender equality as an integral part of all our Aims.

Progress towards our objectives

Highlights

- *Working towards ensuring that women and men, and boys and girls, enjoy equal rights to a secure livelihood and basic social services.* There are examples from across our programme of women taking on new economic activities, and increasingly assuming civic responsibilities alongside men. Women report how money that they have earned has supported their families, for instance enabling children to go to school and diets to be improved. Programmes are supporting girls to go to school and stay on at school, in an educational environment that supports their learning.
- *Challenging discriminatory ideas and practices that sustain inequalities.* Our international campaign entitled *Trading Away Our Rights*, on women's labour rights, including 15 national campaigns, is challenging and influencing attitudes within governments and companies about gender equality and women's rights. In the Dominican Republic, our partners have contributed to the issue of gender-based violence receiving a greater degree of public attention, institutions becoming more aware of women's rights, and more women who have suffered violence receiving support to change their situation. In Sierra Leone, in the first local-government elections since 1972, training provided by Oxfam's partner supported 53 women candidates to be elected as councillors: 58 out of a 465 councillors elected nationally were women.

We emphasise the importance of working towards equality between women and men, and boys and girls, in all our work, because women's rights are important *per se*, and because overcoming poverty and achieving gender equality are mutually dependent (Amartya Sen, 1999³). Vicious cycles of inequality, poverty, and discrimination need to be broken. For example, heavy domestic duties still keep many girls out of school, and this in turn limits their choices as women, for instance in marriage and child-bearing, as well as their economic opportunities. Supporting women to earn money and have control of it is important not only because it is their right, but because women can be seen to prioritise their families' well-being when deciding how to spend money, for instance choosing to improve their families' diet and ensure that their children go to school.

The dimensions that we use to assess progress in our work on gender equality relate to several different aspects of women's rights: more equitable access to, and control over, economic and natural

³ *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press.

resources and basic social services; fewer women suffering gender-based violence; more equitable participation in decision making within the home, and in civil and political life; changing gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls.

This chapter starts with a case study to illustrate what addressing gender inequalities means in practice in one particular programme; in this instance working in a complex humanitarian situation. We then summarise the types of shift that are occurring as we seek to work towards greater equality between women and men in our various programmes: our humanitarian work, and our support for conflict reduction, livelihoods, basic services, and people's right to be heard. Most of the examples mentioned come from case studies in other chapters of this report.

We then look at examples of programmes and projects aimed specifically at promoting gender equality and women's rights. Our priority is to work with others to end violence against women, but we also have projects that promote women's involvement in political life, advocate for women's rights, and explore ways to involve men as well as women in working for gender equality.

Influencing relations between women and men throughout our work

This case study from Kitgum, northern Uganda, illustrates the types of action that have proved important in seeking to address gender inequalities within the programme.⁴ The case study also identifies what women and men recognise as positive changes arising as a result. In particular, women say that opportunities to earn income usually have a very positive impact on their status within communities, and often also within the household.

Greater equality between women and men in northern Uganda

Oxfam began working in northern Uganda in 1986, at the same time as an internal conflict started between the government of Uganda and a rebel group known as the Lord's Resistance Army. In June 2002 the security situation in northern Uganda deteriorated dramatically, and more than 95 per cent of the rural population of Kitgum District (approximately 250,000 people) moved, or were moved, into 18 severely congested and under-served camps for internally displaced persons. Oxfam began responding to the urgent humanitarian needs of the displaced people. Much of our emergency work has involved infrastructure construction: digging latrine pits, trenching for laying pipes, installation of water tanks, and shelter construction. The programme has employed thousands of unskilled labourers, and hundreds of skilled and semi-skilled masons, mechanics, plumbers, and carpenters. Oxfam has achieved an average of 30 per cent female employment in activities which, without advocacy and intervention, would have remained exclusively male.

In northern Uganda, women are still typically excluded from participation in organised politics and community leadership, remaining confined to an overburdened domestic role. Oxfam has deliberately sought ways to increase their involvement and participation in the programme by continually challenging staff, partners, and volunteers to think, '*With this activity, how can we create greater equality between men and women?*' This systematic questioning has led Oxfam to innovate and challenge accepted norms and assumptions.

From the outset, an objective was set of involving an equal number of women and men volunteers in public health activities. This has been maintained and is generally well supported by the public and camp leadership. But there have been complaints about both men and women. It is said that men don't spend enough time talking to people to know what is really going on, and do not get an accurate picture of health and hygiene practices at household level, because it is generally women who are responsible for this. It is also said that women don't like to take advice from other women. These arguments are to be expected, and can be slowly addressed over

⁴ In some of the case studies in this report, we use underlining to emphasise what the assessment suggests has been important in bringing about change, or lessons for the future. Sometimes this refers to Oxfam's and our partners' strategies, sometimes to what we observe in the social context.

time, with increased information and awareness about the benefits of equal involvement and participation of both women and men.

Local women and men take on monitoring duties, to check the work being done in areas where it is too insecure for Oxfam staff to go. It is found that older women tend to probe and enquire more deeply than others, to find out exactly what is happening, and why.

Because of the insecurity in the District, residents from the villages around Kitgum Town 'commute' each night to sleep in and around the town centre. Oxfam has responded by building shelters. Rather than follow the usual contracting procedure, the Public Health Team headhunted and found two trained women masons, and two trained women carpenters. The team then recruited casual construction labour from among the displaced women who commute into town nightly to sleep in the safety of these shelters. The Public Health Team supervised the work of these women directly, helping to increase their construction skills.

This first women's construction team, and their project, attracted a lot of attention from the community. Local and district leaders, and passers-by, all commented favourably, and vocational training schools used the project as an example when advertising to attract women into their trades programmes. The women went on to complete other Oxfam contracts successfully, and the team is now established as a viable contractor in Kitgum.

Most of Oxfam's construction work is contracted out to pre-qualified private businesses. In 2004–05, Oxfam included a clause in the contracts stipulating that 30 per cent of labourers on projects must be women. Contractors agreed with the condition, readily acknowledging that families and children often benefit more when women are earning money. Follow-up visits to construction sites found that the clause was being met: women were being paid the same as men, and were being given the opportunity to work on all the various construction tasks. Several construction sites provided space and shade for babies to be cared for nearby.

However, the sight of a woman digging a trench with a baby on her back is not necessarily a cause for celebration. Community members have commented on this at programme-review meetings, saying that while it is vital for women to earn money, they still carry the entire domestic burden as well. However, women working as casual employees, and those receiving micro-finance, do say that opportunities to earn income usually have a very positive impact on their status within communities, and often also within the household.

What contractors, local leaders, and the community agree on is that when women earn money, children get more food, and that this is the most important argument for their employment. Communities see the benefits, so they now need to be encouraged to provide the necessary practical support, including reducing working women's other responsibilities.

Oxfam also employs women, as well as men, as casual labourers for loading and off-loading trucks; we employ women security guards, and have now trained a woman driver. Since Oxfam hired its first female security guards in late 2004, at least four other agencies in Kitgum have followed suit. Oxfam is still the only agency with a fully qualified female driver. These changes are generally applauded by the community, by both women and men.

Education for our own staff and partners is essential to help to make these changes. For instance, some of our security guards felt stressed when unemployed men, queuing for casual work, asked '*Why is Oxfam favouring women? Why are you employing women when we men need work?*' But, following training and discussion, the guards now understand and can convey to others that, when our mission is to overcome poverty and suffering, the question of *who gets paid* is critical. All staff need to understand the relevance of our work on gender equality for development and human rights. But proposals to change the roles of women can be particularly threatening for men if they think about applying workplace attitudes in their own

homes. This is an area where we need to provide more opportunity for discussion, presenting positive role models and positive impacts on family life.

What progress towards addressing gender inequalities are we seeing generally across our programming? What results do we see?

Gender equality and humanitarian assistance

In many humanitarian programmes, women are targeted to receive food and other goods for their whole household; income-generation activities ensure that women are involved; and particular attention is paid to the participation of households headed by women. We seek to understand and respond to the particular needs and vulnerabilities of women at times of crisis. In the case studies reported from Sri Lanka and Aceh, Indonesia, after the Indian Ocean tsunami, Bangladesh after the floods in 2004, and Haiti after the floods and political instability during 2004, we see what women value about the way in which assistance was provided, and some of the challenges that remain. We know, for instance, the importance of including underwear and sanitary protection for women as part of relief supplies. In Bangladesh, distributing relief food supplies to women for their household was found to help to build their self-esteem. However, women did not prioritise their own nutritional needs. They explained that this was partly because they tend to deliberately eat less during floods, to control their bowel movements, because of the difficulties and risks involved in finding private places to defaecate. The women taking part in Oxfam's shelter programme in Sri Lanka expressed pride and a sense of purpose in building a place for their family to live. They gained basic construction skills and an income at the same time. The research that Oxfam⁵ undertook, and published, showing that more women than men had died as a result of the tsunami, and some of the reasons for this, reached a wide audience because of the media attention that it attracted.

Gender equality and livelihoods

Programme case studies from Malawi, Albania, Viet Nam, Ghana, and Mauritania show women becoming involved in new economic enterprises, and adopting new responsibilities outside the home. They show that stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes about the roles of women and men are being challenged, particularly in terms of economic activities. Often, women are more confident as a result of earning more money, and men show them more respect. Women report that the money they have earned has been used to support their children go to school, improve the family's diet, and support their own or other family members in further economic activities. Findings vary, but many women report a greater participation in decision making, both within the household and in the wider community. However, more often than not, husbands and other family members are taking on few if any of women's traditional household and child-care responsibilities, so their economic empowerment comes at the cost of an increased workload.

Gender equality and education

Education programmes are encouraging girls to go to school, and stay at school. Women community education facilitators, working with girls and their families, are helping this to happen in pastoralist areas of Niger. Supporting the appointment and professional development of women teachers is providing a positive role model for girls and their parents in northern Mozambique and Viet Nam. The introduction of active-learning methods, involving group work and games, is helping girls to gain confidence and take on responsibilities within the classroom alongside boys in Viet Nam. The provision of scholarships, dormitories, bicycles, and vocational training activities at school is enabling girls from poor families to stay on into secondary education in Cambodia.

Gender equality and civic engagement

Across Oxfam's Aims, there are examples of programmes actively supporting women to assume new civic responsibilities alongside men. In northern Mozambique, more women are becoming involved in

⁵ This research was undertaken in collaboration with UNFPA.

school councils. In Rwanda, women are assuming responsibilities within their communities to resolve conflicts, and some have been selected for service on provincial mediation panels, or as members of the Gacaca courts, dealing with perpetrators of the genocide. In Malawi, women and men are equally represented on Village Development Committees. Literacy training made an important contribution to help women to take on these responsibilities, although in Rwanda the programme designed an innovative training course for non-literate women.

Gender equality and violence

In a few of our programmes, we are seeing efforts to challenge communities to address gender-based violence. For instance, community-based educators in our livelihoods programme in the Shire Highlands of Malawi are prompting individuals to start challenging cultural beliefs that condone violence against women, and traditional leaders are seen to be defending the rights of women and publicly condemning violence against women. In our education programme in northern Mozambique, teachers, the community, and students have been supported to think about violence against girls and women. This has led one community to challenge cases of abuse of girls, and lobbying by one of our partners led the Ministry of Education to introduce a clear process for dealing with cases of abuse in schools. Both within on-going project activities in these programmes in Malawi and Mozambique, and through campaigning during the international days of action for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the link between gender-based violence and the spread of HIV has been made. In Sri Lanka, after the tsunami, pictures and messages about violence against women have been painted on water tanks and are promoting discussion at these public meeting-places within camps for displaced people.

Challenging institutions to respect women's and girls' rights

We see some shifts in support for women's rights within various institutions. For example, in our *Trading Away our Rights* campaign, which focuses on the precarious nature of women's employment, the involvement of the unions in Colombia prompted the presidents of the main unions to take part in a demonstration on International Women's Day; the government responded to the campaign by dropping a proposal to increase the pension age for women. In Yemen, whereas the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) two years ago failed to address gender inequality, advocacy and support from Oxfam's programme has helped to ensure that gender equality is now under consideration in the National Plan on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Remaining challenges

Despite the progress being made in addressing gender inequalities across a range of Oxfam's activities, our assessments show that many challenges remain. In some of our campaigning, for instance, we still find it difficult to retain a strong emphasis on gender equality right through from the research stage to the use of the material for media work and other communications initiatives. A small assessment of recent Oxfam policy briefing papers⁶ and interviews with staff showed that we are more consistently integrating gender equality into our research and analysis now, compared with the position two years ago. What we still tend to find problematic is translating complex ideas and situations into popular messages without losing the focus on gender equality.

Staff recognise that individual projects do not usually involve actions that would promote wide change in gender equality. Changes in the values, attitudes, and behaviour of institutions and individuals at different levels of society are required, and occur only slowly. The '*We Can*' Campaign to End Violence Against Women in South Asia, launched with our partners in the last year, is one attempt to begin to take a more strategic approach on the issue of violence against women. The campaign seeks to change social attitudes that accept violence as normal, and mobilise all sections of the family, community, and State to eliminate gender-based violence. We are gaining experience from

⁶ Three papers were studied in detail: 'The Asian Tsunami: Three Weeks On'; 'How Education For All Would Save Millions of Young People from HIV/AIDS'; and 'Paying the Price, Food Aid or Hidden Dumping?'. A number of staff responsible for the papers were interviewed, and several other policy papers were also reviewed.

other areas of our work too, for instance campaigning on women's labour rights, promoting support for the Protocol of Women Rights in Africa, and projects focusing on gender equality and men.

Ending violence against women

It is too early to assess the impact of the 'We Can' Campaign to End Violence Against Women in South Asia. But several Oxfam programmes, from the Dominican Republic, to South Africa, to India, to Cambodia, have been seeking specifically to address violence against women for a number of years now. In our assessments this year, we have looked at the programme in the Dominican Republic. This started in 2000, aiming to guarantee legal and emotional support to women survivors of gender-based violence, and to influence public policies to address violence by men against women.

Violence against women — a public matter in the Dominican Republic

'No one can intrude in the struggles of a man and wife', says an old maxim that for a long time has shielded men who are guilty of violence against women in the Dominican Republic. Twenty-four per cent of women aged between 14 and 49 have been physically mistreated. During the last five years more than 600 women have been murdered, most of them by their partners or ex-partners, in a country with a population of about 9 million.

The issue of gender-based violence has become more visible and public since 1997, when a law was passed to allow the prosecution of perpetrators of sexual and domestic violence against women. However, deep-rooted cultural patterns, sexist myths, and prejudices about sexual and domestic violence, as well as a lack of resources, have hampered the provision of care for women who have experienced violence, and has constrained the application of the law.

Oxfam, working through allies, has funded the provision of direct support services for abused women, and influenced professional workers and their institutions through education and advocacy.

Over the past five years, 3,000 women have received support from the four Emotional and Legal Support units that are funded by the programme and operated by Profamilia, the Aquelarre Centre, and the Nucleus to Support Women. Assistance has been given to 755 women to submit complaints and take cases through the legal process; 194 have obtained protection orders.

Training has been given to 115 doctors, 48 clinical psychologists, and 22 students in the procedures for detecting cases of gender-based violence, giving care to the women involved, and referring cases. The doctors have applied the protocol for detecting gender-based violence with more than 50,000 thousand women, and have referred more than 5,000 to emotional-support units – both those supported by Oxfam, and others funded by government and church bodies.

Training in human rights, gender equality, and agreements and laws against violence against women has been provided for 102 policemen and 24 policewomen, and 230 official and assistant prosecutors, under two government administrations.

Three national studies on *Feminicidio en República Dominicana* (the murder of women in the Dominican Republic) have been published, providing documentary evidence for advocacy work. Each year, Oxfam has supported campaigns by the women's movement to commemorate the violent assassination on 25 November 1960 of the three Mirabel sisters by the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo.⁷ The Coalition in Defense of Women's Human Rights has been supported in its advocacy for legal and judicial reforms that affect women's lives. Advice has been given to the National Attorney Office on the development of a protocol to be used by all public prosecutors'

⁷ In 1999, the United Nations officially recognised 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

offices in the country. This protocol means that public prosecutors cannot claim ignorance of the steps that must be followed in cases of gender-based violence.

Most importantly, the availability of better services and greater public recognition of gender-based violence have encouraged women like Maria to seek support to deal with violence. As she says, *'I always thought he would kill me, but I didn't have the strength to defend myself. But one day I realised that if I wanted to live I could not continue to suffer his violence and do nothing about it.'*

A number of factors have enabled the programme to play a role in changing public positioning on the right of women to live without violence. Importantly, there is a movement of women promoting women's human rights and policies against violence. The Dominican Republic is a signatory to international regulations, such as CEDAW⁸ and the inter-American conference on violence against woman (Belem do Pará). Oxfam has worked in alliance with other international agencies, in particular the International Planned Parenthood Federation. A community of practitioners has been created, involving in particular women lawyers, psychologists, and advisers who provide direct support to victims. This 'practice community' is providing the nucleus for learning on theoretical and methodological issues, and defining strategies. Specialised, high-level training has been developed.

The development of skills in advocacy and lobbying has been essential in gaining the support of key individuals, especially the two general prosecutors for the nation, the director of the national school of judicature, and the director of the national school of public ministry. International experts have been brought in to help to fill gaps in knowledge and to learn ways to overcome fears and internal resistance. Dealing with administrative changes in government institutions following a change in government has constrained progress to some degree.

Oxfam's financial contribution to this programme over five years has exceeded £200,000. Other donors have contributed about £150,000 and local contributions are estimated at £50,000.

Women in civic and political structures

Our assessments provide examples of working towards fuller participation of women in civic and political structures in very different settings — in Sierra Leone and in the UK.

A decade of war ended in Sierra Leone in January 2004, and the country is beginning to rebuild its institutions and political structures. This involves a process of decentralisation, which the government recognises will be important for addressing the root causes of the civil war. The 50/50 Group is a membership organisation, established in 2001 to *'increase the level of female participation in politics and ensure parity in the local council, parliament, cabinet and other decision-making institutions of the state'*. Oxfam has been supporting 50/50 to begin to address this objective in local government elections.

Developing women as political representatives in Sierra Leone

In May 2004, just four months after a decade of war ended, Sierra Leone held its first local-government elections since 1972. Oxfam was involved in a coalition which monitored the running of the elections, and worked with the 50/50 Group to promote and train women candidates. The aim was to train at least one potential woman candidate in each of the 390 wards in Sierra Leone.

In the run-up to the elections, 50/50 trained 26 trainers. They went on to train 370 women, of whom 116 were aspiring local-council candidates. Thirty of those failed to be nominated or stood down; 86 went on to stand in 18 out of the 19 districts. A total

⁸ CEDAW – the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly.

of 58 women were elected, out of 465 councillors nation-wide. 50/50 had trained 53 of them.

An evaluation by an external consultant found that the training gave potential candidates self-confidence to stand for election and resist intimidation. It gave them confidence to speak on campaign platforms and develop their ideas into a manifesto. Women who attended the training sessions, but who were not seeking election, felt inspired and responsible to encourage other women to vote, and to support women candidates in their campaigning. In one town council, the chairperson is actively supporting the four women who were elected. He is making sure that they receive further training, and refuses to make a decision without all four women being in attendance at the council meeting.

Generally, men interviewed in the evaluation felt that attitudes should change in favour of accepting women as leaders. However, the concept of '50/50' in the home is still treated with contempt and derision by many men.

The 50/50 project inevitably faced obstacles, given the circumstances. The Local Government Act was passed only in February 2004, just three months before the election. 50/50 trained its trainers just one week before campaigning began. The National Election Commission (NEC) faced enormous challenges in organising the election in a short period of time. The impartiality of some NEC officers was questioned, with women reporting that officers had complicated the process for them, rather than explaining it; examples were given of failure to display their names on the candidate register. Women who stood as independents reported that untruths were spread about them by members and candidates of the political parties.

It is a critical moment in Sierra Leone for the development of civil society, and for women to establish their place in the development of their country. What lessons are to be learned from this short project that 50/50 and Oxfam can build into future work?

The women councillors see themselves as role models. They feel that they will encourage other women to take part in public life too, if they themselves can do a good job. On-going training will help to build their confidence and understanding.

The involvement of women from all sections of society is important. Less educated women were not included in the training in every district but one. This needs to be tackled by identifying capable, enthusiastic women who would benefit from learning to read, and from other education, and who would be willing to stand as future candidates. Improving literacy more generally across the electorate is also important, to ensure that some sections of society are not disenfranchised. In the last election, it is said that many men and women were 'shown' how to vote.

There are opportunities to build a broader movement for change by supporting people to recognise their common interests. There is a lack of strong alliances between women's organisations at the moment. There is potential for women and young people to work together, as they have both been excluded from power in similar ways in the past.

Identifying men in positions of power who are supporting women's development, such as the town-council Chair mentioned above, can provide powerful examples of male leadership for gender equality. The male-dominated culture of the political parties created serious obstacles to women gaining an entry point to the local elections, and tackling it will be challenging. 50/50 is the only national organisation with the explicit aims of helping women into positions of leadership, and helping women to make their voices heard in Sierra Leone. Through the election project, it has strengthened its structure across the country, and is building its organisation in ways that will help it to work more effectively towards its aims. 50/50 needs to reaffirm its political neutrality, and also be clear in its support for positive representation of women from all sections of society. It is important to be seen to be politically neutral and to value principles of equality in this type of work. Some people taking part in the evaluation saw 50/50 as being sympathetic to one political party. Providing each candidate who stood at the election with some money for campaigning expenses might also have compromised

the non-partisan aims of the project. With further support, 50/50 can become a champion for women's participation in civic and political life.

Donor funding of £31,700 was received for this project.⁹ Some activities will continue until late 2005. 50/50 committed a substantial amount of volunteer time and some funding to the process, and Oxfam also contributed about £7,000 to cover the costs of the evaluation exercise.

The experience of the work done in the run-up to the 2004 elections shows that there should be no let-up in the process now that it has begun. It will take time for Sierra Leone to build its civic and political structures after the years of war, and for women's position in society to change. Efforts now need to be focused on the parliamentary, presidential, and local elections that will take place in 2007 and 2008.

The next case study, from the UK, illustrates how clear evidence about gender inequalities can be used to promote change. It also illustrates a piece of work designed to engage both women and men in seeking to achieve gender equality. The project is co-ordinated by the Manchester Women's Network, an umbrella organisation for more than 200 women's groups in the city, which is supported by Oxfam. The first stage sought to demonstrate the unequal involvement and influence of women and men in community engagement processes in local government. The second stage of the project seeks to influence decision makers in Manchester and beyond to change this situation.

A gender audit of community engagement in Manchester, UK

The UK government is promoting the engagement of the community and voluntary sector in regeneration processes, and local councils have developed Community Engagement Strategies. In implementing its strategy, Manchester City Council decided to commission a Gender Audit, to investigate the perceived imbalance in the involvement and influence of men and women. The Manchester Women's Network took up the opportunity to co-ordinate the Audit.

The Audit confirmed an imbalance in the involvement and influence of women and men. The city-wide Local Strategic Partnership, which brings together the statutory, voluntary, community, and private sectors, has a membership consisting of considerably more men (68 per cent) than women (32 per cent). Where women have a significant presence, it is generally limited to the local community level. Twenty-nine per cent of women, but only 18 per cent of men, are involved in a community group. However, even where numerical attendance was more equal, men clearly dominated in terms of actual verbal participation and influence on decision making. The Audit also revealed that people from black and minority ethnic groups are under-represented. People of Asian ethnic origin make up 29 per cent of the community in one ward, but only between 3–8 per cent of those involved in ward-level decision-making structures. Women of black and minority ethnic background are particularly under-represented, even on those decision-making structures where participation otherwise reflected the ethnic mix in the population.

The Audit identified that more women than men were motivated to participate by the need to improve the community and to socialise. More men than women were motivated out of their duty as a citizen, and the desire to further their career. Younger people are least likely, and older people most likely, to participate in decision making. Women of South Asian origin face a number of additional barriers linked to their ethnicity. These include language problems and the customary role of women that prevents them from participating in mixed-sex meetings.

Statutory agencies have already begun to be influenced by the project. Manchester City Council has developed a Community Engagement Toolkit, which incorporates mechanisms to address concerns about gender inequality. Staff in statutory agencies

⁹ A total of £174,000 was received for the whole Women in Leadership project; the work described on the local government elections forms a component.

observed that the Audit had 'opened their minds'. The Manchester Centre for Arts and Technology and Manchester Adult Education Service are adapting their previously conventional, prescriptive approach to adult learning. They are now talking to communities and thinking about gender issues: for example, they recognise that male learners who are fathers may also need child-care provision. Training on gender equality and cultural awareness has been approved for curriculum use at a local girls' school with a high proportion of students of Asian origin. The project is preparing two toolkits to assist other agencies to raise gender awareness and conduct a gender audit.

The project has been well received at national level by regeneration decision-makers and wider bodies working on democracy. The project workers have spoken about the Audit and its findings at national meetings, and its approach will be highlighted as an example of good practice on the government website www.renewal.net/.

Communities and agencies have commended the open and transparent approach used during the Audit. They have stressed the need for prompt feedback of findings in order to maintain momentum and influence. Participation in the Audit prompted discussion of gender inequalities by the different groups involved, and new levels of awareness. The success of the project is largely due to a committed working group with a range of skills, led by an experienced and inspiring development worker, which met weekly. Oxfam's advice and support, drawing on our international experience, and adequate funding also contributed to the project's achievements. With funding uncertainties and changes in personnel this year, the group is now struggling to sustain the pace of its work, which is needed for wider dissemination and follow-through on the results.

Oxfam's financial contribution to this project has been £14,800, for conducting the audit and for the follow-up activities, which are continuing.

Promoting women's rights

Opportunities have been taken to support networks and participate in international processes which seek to strengthen women's rights through Human Rights frameworks and protocols.

Over the past year, Oxfam's Pan Africa programme has been supporting Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR)¹⁰ in seeking the ratification, popularisation, and implementation of the African Union (AU) Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa. An innovative Internet and mobile-phone petition to Heads of States was mounted, attracting 5,000 signatories. Members of the coalition engaged with more than twenty Foreign Ministers at two AU Summits, and national policy-makers and the public were asked to support the ratification of the Protocol in nine African countries. When the campaign began, only one country, Comoros, had ratified the Protocol. One year on, ten countries have now done so.

The coalition's efforts have not gone unnoticed. At the 2005 summit of Heads of States in Abuja, the Senegalese Minister acknowledged the pressure put on Senegal by the coalition to persuade it to ratify the Protocol. Winnie Byanyima, Gender Director at the Office of the Chairperson of the African Union, publicly thanked the coalition, saying, *'Thanks to the efforts of your campaigns, we will attain the number we require. You should note that the Protocol stands apart from the tradition of most African instruments that are not ratified at such speed. We plan to work with you in future to promote women's rights.'* Hon. Rita Okpan, Minister of Women's Affairs, Federal Republic of Nigeria also expressed her gratitude.

Oxfam contributed about £50,000 to this work in 2004–05, and sat on the steering committee of SOAWR. We supported SOAWR's research and its successful efforts to broaden its sources of funding.

¹⁰ SOAWR comprises 19 women's and development organisations in nine countries across Southern, Eastern, and Western Africa.

Gender equality and men

The experiences described above in the case study of a gender audit in the UK form part of a growing body of knowledge that Oxfam has accumulated in recent years about working with women *and* men to bring about gender equality. Work on this topic has been led from our UK Poverty Programme and the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Commonwealth of Independent States Region, and it has been promoted through *The Gender Equality and Men (GEM) Project*. The project has helped us to develop a deeper analysis of the benefits and challenges of working with men and boys to promote gender equality, and has led to a clearer conceptual understanding of men, masculinities, and gender relations. Pilot projects have been supported which worked with men on issues of violence against women in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Albania, and the Negev Desert (Israel); changes to policy and practice have been achieved at various levels of government in the UK and Yemen.

The GEM Project was brought to a close in June 2004 with Oxfam's publication of *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, which draws together the experiences and learning of both Oxfam and external practitioners in this field.

One of the Oxfam case studies in the book is from Yemen. In this strongly patriarchal society, violence against women is a widespread phenomenon. It is manifested in wife-battering, forced early marriage, and 'honour crimes'. Such violence is linked to, and sustains, the exclusion of girls from education, the denial of women's inheritance rights, and the limiting of women's opportunity to claim divorce or alimony. The GEM project worked with women's organisations to form partnerships and alliances with key male policy-makers and community leaders. Dialogues on gender inequality have been developed, based on values of justice and human dignity. Men's potential positive roles as allies in overcoming inequality and violence have been recognised and emphasised, rather than focusing only on their negative roles in perpetuating it. Trust and co-operation have been fostered through these dialogues. Male advocacy groups have been set up, including policemen, judges, lawyers, academics, and other respected members of the community. Their role is vital in educating other men and taking effective action on women's rights, because the impact of women's action to raise awareness of gender issues among men is constrained by their lower status in society. One of the most successful aspects of this project has been the work done with the Ministry of Endowment (the highest religious institute in Yemen) in recognising the place of women's rights within Islam. The Ministry has now developed messages regarding violence and women's rights, to be included in Friday prayers. In this way, a vast number of men will be reached through a dialogue which they accept and respect.

Lessons, issues, and risks

The need for a step-change to influence ideas and beliefs about gender

Despite the encouraging results that we see in individual projects and programmes, we know that a step-change in approach is needed by us and others if gender inequalities are to be addressed in a fundamental way. There are entrenched ideas and beliefs within households, and in institutions at all levels of society, which sustain gender inequalities. Discussion has started within Oxfam International to identify possible actions of a magnitude different from that of our current efforts, in order to contribute to global shifts on women's rights. We shall draw on what we are learning from our global campaigning on other issues, and from the '*We Can*' campaign as it develops, when thinking about future strategy.

Continuing to develop good practice

We need to continue to do good work in individual projects and programmes, and carry on working towards achieving good practice consistently everywhere. Despite the evident progress being made in many programmes, some familiar weaknesses in our programme management are mentioned in a number of reports. These include the failure to include a clear gender analysis when we design programmes, not establishing clear activities and indicators for working on gender relations, not

having baseline data against which change can be measured, and not having data disaggregated by sex. Promoting gender equality is most effective when it is considered from the time when we make programme and campaign choices, to the design of programmes, and right through the programme cycle.

We are seeing the benefits of the work that has been done to integrate gender equality into our organisational processes, systems, and tools. For instance, the fact that gender equality has been a dimension of impact-assessment work for all programmes for the past six years has probably contributed to the stronger analysis that we have seen year on year. The Terms of Reference for all policy papers now include a section in which the commissioner must explain how it is proposed to address gender inequality – a development which seems to be contributing to the stronger gender analysis that we are seeing in this area of our work. We need to carry on supporting staff to consider gender equality consistently in their work by using the available processes, systems, and tools.

Staff recognise that competing priorities still mean that they do not always pay sufficient attention to gender-equality considerations. The UK Poverty Programme concluded that having some programmes focusing specifically on gender equality is important because they ensure dedicated time for testing assumptions, developing models of good practice, and stimulating creative thinking. The experiences from these programmes can help teams to develop their skills, and apply them more broadly in their work.

Basing our own actions on evidence, and challenging others with evidence, is as important in our gender-equality work as in any other area. We saw this in the research we did after the Indian Ocean tsunami, and the gender audit carried out in Manchester in the UK.

Addressing our own attitudes, and those of partners, is also essential in developing our practice. The need for education, and opportunities for all staff to discuss gender inequalities in relation to poverty and human rights, was highlighted in the case study from Kitgum, northern Uganda. Partner organisations also need these opportunities. Discussions on gender equality should be part of the process of building a relationship with a partner organisation, in our appraisal of their organisation, in agreeing a contract with them, and in monitoring and evaluation.

Working with men

Continuing to develop our understanding of how to work with men as well as women to achieve gender equality is crucial, if we are to contribute to the step-change mentioned above. The evaluation of the Sierra Leone initiative that supported women candidates in local government elections illustrated, for example, that men may support the idea of women taking on leadership roles in the community, but they remain resistant to changes in their own relationships at home. The programme also illustrated the importance of identifying men in leadership positions who will take assertive action on gender equality. We intend to continue developing tools and frameworks that can assist staff and partners in working with men on gender equality.

2 The right to life and security

The changes that we want to see in the world

Our aim is to ensure the right to humanitarian protection and assistance for people caught up in conflict and disaster. We specialise in public health (water and sanitation, hygiene promotion, food and nutrition) and ensuring that humanitarian response work takes account of gender. We also demand the protection of civilians in conflict, and we work to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance generally.

Within Oxfam's work on conflict reduction, we support civil-society organisations and initiatives to reduce conflict and develop peaceful livelihoods, and campaign for tough controls on the international arms trade.

Progress towards our objectives

Highlights

- *Responding to demanding, large-scale humanitarian crises.* Oxfam is meeting the public-health needs of 750,000 people in Darfur, western Sudan, and in Chad. Programmes in response to the tsunami in the Indian Ocean are assisting 600,000 people in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Maldives.
- *Work on long-term preparedness is having an impact.* When severe floods hit Bangladesh in 2004, we found that, where work to prepare for disasters had been done with communities and partner agencies, the knowledge, structures, and facilities that had been developed served communities well in coping with the crisis.
- *Integrating conflict reduction into our programmes.* An internal review found that our most effective programmes are those in which conflict-reduction and peace-building objectives are pursued alongside work to achieve other objectives, such as secure livelihoods, good governance, and gender equality.

While this year has been very much dominated by the large and high-profile programmes described in case studies below, Oxfam has continued its work in conditions of on-going instability and crisis, in countries such as the **Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Colombia** that have remained behind the headlines. Work in the **Palestinian Territories** to protect and improve public-health facilities continues, with targets for the year exceeded in provision of water networks and storage. We have responded to floods, drought and chronic food insecurity through innovative approaches such as food and livestock fairs (see the Haiti case study for example) and voucher schemes to maximise people's choices in **Southern and Eastern Africa and Sudan**.

In many of these cases we are strengthening the links between humanitarian response and our efforts to help people to build more sustainable livelihoods and asset bases in order to reduce their vulnerability to future shocks (see Chapter 3 for more details). In **Mali** our response to the massive locust swarms that invaded several countries in West Africa was to vaccinate almost 300,000 cattle that had been weakened by fodder shortages. Other examples of effective, rapid public-health and emergency livelihoods responses to natural disaster took place in **Jamaica** after Hurricane Ivan and in the **Philippines** after serious coastal flooding following a typhoon.

Responding to acute emergencies

The frequency and scale of humanitarian crises has made this an extraordinary year, beginning with a huge effort to scale up our operations to respond to the increasingly alarming situations in **Darfur**, in western Sudan, and in **Chad**. We also responded to a series of natural disasters and political crises through the year in **Haiti**, and to the worst flooding in South Asia in six years, which inundated two-thirds of **Bangladesh**. The year ended with a massive multi-country response to the Asian **tsunami**. Oxfam's ability to maximise available resources and to operate several simultaneous large-scale emergency programmes is a significant achievement. The following case studies illustrate the range of programming undertaken.

Responding to the Sudan crisis

The crisis in **Darfur**, western Sudan, had been building since late 2003, with 2.1 million people forced from their homes by conflict. The objectives of the programme were to reduce the incidence of water-related disease for up to 500,000 displaced people, and to improve their security through integrating a protection analysis¹¹ into our work on the ground, and through advocacy in Sudan and beyond. Despite a slow start and an extremely challenging working environment, the programme met and then exceeded its goals in the year, eventually meeting public-health needs of 650,000 people with a £10 million budget in 2004–05. In a recent report to a major donor, the highlights of our programme impact included a decrease of 80 per cent in diarrhoea morbidity (against our objective of 50 per cent) in Abu Shouk; provision of clean water in three sites, averaging more than 11 litres per person per day (the original target was 5 ltr PPD); and almost doubling the planned latrine provision in four locations, serving 256,000 people. It is harder to quantify our impact on protection needs, but a protection analysis was integrated into our work, and substantial public and private advocacy work took place throughout the programme period.

In less than a year, the population of Mornei town has swelled from 5,000 to 80,000 as people fled attacks in the surrounding communities. Oxfam began work in October on water supply and health promotion. There was an existing water supply (installed by Oxfam some years ago), but the vastly increased population exceeded its capacity. Oxfam undertook a major extension and rationalisation of the system. By improving existing water sources – up-grading pumps and distribution networks, adding five new boreholes, erecting water tanks as storage, and installing more than 70 tap-stands – we are now able to provide sufficient water for the entire population, at a rate of 19 litres of water per person per day. We have also made it more efficient and cheaper to run, so making the supply more sustainable.

The expanded system is designed so that if the population were to decline again in future, part of the system could be removed, while leaving the rest in place. Two local water-authority engineers have been seconded to facilitate its eventual handover.

Work in hygiene promotion ensured that people clean dirty jerry cans before filling them. Oxfam held a 'jerry can amnesty' for those containers beyond salvation, and 1,500 old jerry cans were replaced with new ones. We also work on hygiene and sanitation in the town's nine schools, and with 11 children's clubs that we have set up. We have constructed latrines and hand-washing facilities in five schools and we have worked with Concern and the Ministry of Health to conduct the first rubbish-clean-up programme.

Oxfam also responded to the needs of about half of the, approximately, 200,000 refugees from Darfur who had fled their homes and crossed into eastern **Chad**. Intermón is the lead for Oxfam International's Humanitarian Consortium in Chad. The tension and expectations that arose proved to be an early and challenging test for the Consortium model. Oxfam set up a large programme, working alongside SECADEV,

¹¹ See the section on Protection of Civilians later in this chapter for more explanation of Oxfam's work in protection.

an Intermón partner. Again, the goal was to reduce water-related diseases, targeting 100,000 people in eight refugee camps: to date there has been no widespread outbreak of life-threatening diseases such as cholera or hepatitis. The budget for the year 2004–05 was £4.7 million; it was funded by 15 institutional donors. Eastern Chad is very remote and sparsely populated, and proved a particularly challenging environment in which to operate, due to poor transport, communications, and infrastructure. The increased refugee flows into Chad placed severe strains on available resources – particularly water.

The Humanitarian Department played a key role in supporting both the Darfur and Chad programmes with management, planning, technical advice, and logistical support: 22 charter flights were sent, carrying vehicles and essential water and sanitation equipment. Along with considerable numbers of Humanitarian Department staff deployments, the department recruited more than 170 extra staff for these programmes.

The Darfur crisis again raised the perennial dilemma for Oxfam of how to balance its humanitarian campaigning with operational programmes when frank campaigning may increase risks – either to security or to the effective delivery of aid. Oxfam struck a balance which largely restricted its specific policy proposals, and its criticism of warring parties, to private lobbying and off-the-record media briefing. It is not clear whether more robust campaigning would have had greater impact, but this balance was constantly difficult to manage. The deployment of an African Union mission in Darfur was a welcome development, but painfully slow.

Several key challenges which at times seriously threatened the programmes have been the subject of lengthy debate (see the 'lessons' section below). We were slow to make key decisions to scale up to a level that was appropriate to humanitarian needs, and it was suggested that collapsing management lines to facilitate speedier decision making could have helped. Many staff feel that the organisation had only 'turned the corner' in the autumn of 2004, after a Programme Acceleration Plan had been implemented in Darfur to increase the expansion and pace of operations. In-country management was weak, presenting problems that took a long time to resolve and arguably led to a failure to capitalise on the comparative advantage of our long in-country presence. External factors included severe difficulties in obtaining visas for international staff, difficulties in accessing insecure areas, and the lack of accurate information on the scale of humanitarian needs. Overall, finding suitable staff when an increasing number of agencies were mounting operations meant intense competition for a limited pool of qualified people. Despite the large numbers of successful recruitments, the Humanitarian Department did on several occasions fail to deliver appropriate staff on time, and these gaps did represent a very real risk to our programme. Recruitment staff noted that interest in positions to work on the response to the tsunami has been three times greater than responses to similar advertised positions for the programme in Chad.

Sheer volume of work has been a major challenge for the logistics department in Oxford, exacerbated further by the demands of the tsunami response. Communications between programme and logistics were inadequate throughout the programme, a weakness which has affected the speed with which equipment has been deployed. Gaps in procedures and understanding at technical and logistics team levels have hampered operations.

After the devastating **tsunami** which struck the Indian Ocean region on 26 December 2004, Oxfam quickly launched emergency programmes providing relief items, water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion, and cash and productive inputs to help communities meet their basic needs, recover lost livelihoods, and rebuild their homes. By the end of April 2005, almost 800 staff were involved and

programme expenditure was almost £12.4 million, serving 600,000 people in Aceh (Indonesia), Sri Lanka, India and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Maldives.¹²

Community consultation and shelter programming in Sri Lanka

Following the tsunami, it soon became clear that one of the main problems for the longer term would be a lack of adequate shelter. The government in Sri Lanka declared a coastal buffer zone to prohibit the rebuilding of homes in order to protect communities from further coastal disasters. Instead, people were allocated temporary sites until permanent land could be found. Tents were used as an emergency solution, but most were very hot and too small for long-term use. They were arranged in camps where sanitation was difficult and there was little shade or security. Families needed 'transitional shelters' that they could use for around two years, that were durable, of suitable size, with adequate facilities, and safe to live in.

Oxfam began with a pilot project on the south coast, agreeing with the local authorities to build transitional shelters for some of the families in Tangalle, a coastal village. Many were living with friends and relatives, but the community identified a group of 17 families who had lost everything and had nowhere safe to stay. Oxfam technical experts recognised that this was 'a process, not just a product' and organised shelter-design workshops, taking an initial design, showing it to the families and local government officials, and developing it further with them. The new location of the shelters was also discussed. There was little land available near Tangalle, and it was difficult for the government to find enough sites for all the families who had to move out of the buffer zone. People also wanted to stay near their community, their livelihoods, schools, and families. After discussions, Oxfam agreed to build the transitional shelters in a children's playground in the middle of the village.

Oxfam employed an engineer and a site supervisor to oversee the construction, but skilled and unskilled work was carried out by the families themselves. Participants earned a daily wage in order to replace any earnings that they could have made during that time. The families worked together as a team in full view of the village, as the playground was beside the main road. A sign was erected on-site, describing the project and listing the families.

The shelters were designed so that they could be dismantled after use. Timber joints were bolted, and the floor was made from cement tiles rather than a solid slab. Families can take these materials with them when their permanent homes are built. Space to cook on a shaded veranda area was included. A water-supply system was set up and latrines were built, with three of these designed to be permanent so that they can be used by playground users after the shelters have gone. The same arrangement is planned for electricity supply. In this way the village gained some permanent benefit from the project. This project provided families with a private living space that is big enough and cool enough to carry out livelihood activities such as mending nets and drying fish. The shelters are also safe, lockable places for the families and their belongings. The specific needs of women were targeted; about a third of those involved were women. They expressed a great sense of pride and purpose in building a place for their families to live, and gained basic construction skills and an income to support their families. They will own the materials, which they will be able to re-use or sell when their permanent shelter is built. Specific gender and protection considerations for widowed and single women and girls are now made in the internal design options that are offered to families: these modifications include provision of partitioning and extra entrances.

Working with local partners, Oxfam has been active in influencing agency practice through producing and sharing guidelines on community involvement and Sphere

¹² Figures are for Oxfam GB. Other Oxfam International affiliates are also engaged in programme responses, and a total of 1.1 million people were reached during the first three months of 2005. Some assistance has been provided in Burma, Thailand and Somalia, as well as in the countries mentioned above.

technical standards. Oxfam initiated an informal Shelter Forum by means of which agencies can identify and address shared concerns, such as land issues and site planning, and promoting standards. When the shelters were completed, the local government chose Oxfam's design as an example of what NGOs should be building. Over the next six weeks, the design consultation process was extended to other areas of the country. It continues to evolve – for instance, responding to preference for *cajon* (local palm leaf) roofing, valued for its coolness. Public information materials have been produced to inform people of their rights, and DIY kits have been introduced to help families to further adapt and equip their homes; this process was filmed by RedR as an example of good practice. From a modest initial plan to help a few hundred families with an investment of £50,000, Oxfam's current plan for transitional shelter work applies to 1,550 family homes in four districts, with a budget of £700,000. One-third of these homes have been completed to date.

Challenges facing this project include the relatively high cost of the shelters (around US\$580, compared with UNHCR's recommended maximum of US\$400). A lower cost would allow a greater number to be built, but it is difficult to produce the same quality for a lower price. It can also be hard to justify relatively high spending on transitional shelter when permanent shelter is also required. However, staff felt strongly that these factors were outweighed by the value of providing shelter that not only met Sphere standards but also enabled people to have a safe, dignified existence. The lack of shelter specialists proved to hamper initial progress, so there is now increased emphasis on recruiting and training teams of Sri Lankan nationals to carry on the work. Perhaps the greatest challenge is the continuing uncertainty concerning critical land issues for those unable to return to their original home sites. As families wait for permanent shelter solutions, tensions may grow, and Oxfam will be expected to assist families even if it is not actively engaged in constructing permanent shelter. High demand for materials may cause shortages, and this risk needs to be carefully monitored.

During December 2003, floods affected Cap Haitien, the second largest city of **Haiti**, and during March 2004 new floods affected the south-east of the country. These problems were exacerbated by political turmoil, sparking escalating violence and the resignation and exile of the President. Alongside its response to meet water and sanitation needs, Oxfam initiated a livelihoods programme in order to help people to recover lost assets.

Emergency livelihoods and public-health responses in Haiti

Oxfam's responses focused on Cap Haitien in the north, and in the south-eastern areas of Mapou and Thiotte. With project budgets totalling more than £1.9 million, about 130,000 people were reached – for less than £15 per head.¹³ The emergency livelihood programme in Mapou aimed to restore agricultural assets, re-establish businesses and petty trade for 250 women, and ensure an income for 500 flood-affected households through cash-for-work activities. The main harvest of maize and beans failed, due to an exceptional spell of drought during the growing season, but livestock projects were successful, with recipients enabled to purchase two goats or other animals at livestock fairs. Trade activities and cash remuneration covered part of the household needs, while seeds distribution and livestock fairs were found to partially re-establish productive assets. This success is judged suitable for replication elsewhere. The weekly remuneration was able to cover the costs of three full meals for an average family, helped to increase school-attendance rates, and reduced the sale of essential assets. It has not been possible to measure the impact of the project on levels of malnutrition, due to the lack of reliable data.

The impact assessment report suggests some improvements, such as using seed fairs to display different indigenous varieties and exchanging information among

¹³ The total expenditure on humanitarian activities in Haiti during 2004–05 was just over £3m and reached 175,000 people.

farmers and producers. Setting the remuneration level in the cash-for-work activities has been a key issue. Fixing the prices at a value very close to rates on the local labour market has been an important step to avoid disruption of the local market or diversion from other livelihood activities. Cash-for-work programmes should consider support for vulnerable groups who are not able to work, as was done in Cap Haitien. In addition, they should also consider providing households with care facilities or care providers, especially when a large number of women participate in public-work schemes.

The public-health programme was found to increase knowledge and achieve change in certain hygiene practices (hand washing, water treatment, and removal of infant excreta). Oxfam provided sufficient numbers of water tanks and storage cisterns in a community that previously had very low coverage. Impact is not easy to define, given the lack of data on the periods before, during, and after the emergency; however, the head of the health centre considered Oxfam's work very useful in avoiding epidemic outbreaks of disease. The programme included cleaning drainage canals and waste-removal work: 2,000 people took part and were paid in cash and in rice from 50 local shops contracted by the project. This initiative improved environmental conditions and reduced further flood risks.

The impact assessment report identified weaknesses such as limited improvements in access to services, and a failure to provide hygiene kits, soap, and containers for household water. The type and quality of latrines did not always meet international standards, and there was insufficient coverage to meet needs. The canal-cleaning initiative was judged to have had a significant short-term impact in protecting the livelihoods of vulnerable people (no flooding occurred in the heavy rains), but it could not be sustained by the communities after five months.

Floods present an annual threat to life and livelihoods in South Asia, requiring both speedy response and investment in helping communities to prepare for their impact. The past year saw the worst flooding in six years, the most severe occurring in north-east India and Bangladesh in the first week of July 2004. In **Bangladesh** floods spread to 41 districts, affecting more than 20 million people and inundating two-thirds of the total land mass.

Responding to floods in Bangladesh

Millions were marooned, and an estimated 1.6 million people moved to live in makeshift shelters. The death toll rose to around 700, and water-borne diseases spread rapidly in the initial stage: in August 2004, the number of people affected by diarrhoea rose to exceed 100,000. This was the worst flooding since 1998. Oxfam responded in 11 districts, some of them in areas where there were long-standing preparedness programmes (see below) with partners in the River Basin Programme, and some in new areas where Oxfam was working for the first time. The total number of beneficiaries was around 64,000 families (over 300,000 people) with a programme budget of £2.3 million, giving a cost per person of just over £7.

The response aimed to help the worst-affected families to survive the floods by ensuring improved public-health facilities (sanitary latrines and tube-wells), supplying essential food and non-food items, and providing cash-for-work opportunities. It also aimed to rebuild livelihoods through house repairs, and the supply of fodder, boats, fishing nets, seeds, and tools.

Oxfam focused its response in the worst-affected districts; within those districts, women, female-headed families, nursing mothers, disabled people, and elderly people were targeted. As markets became volatile, people suffered – both as consumers and as producers. Food prices escalated, and the sale price of animals was approximately 50 per cent lower than normal, but purchasing food items locally in Gaibanda was found to contribute to restarting the local economy. Oxfam's response demonstrated some good practices, such as creating income-earning opportunities for women, and facilitating this through measures such as providing for baby-sitting

by elderly and physically challenged women, so that mothers could be fully involved in cash-for-work schemes.

The report found that targeting women as beneficiaries for food distribution was useful in building their self-esteem and their value in society. However, this did not have any impact on their own nutritional intake. On several occasions women mentioned that they cut down on their food consumption as stocks began to be depleted. It was also found that they deliberately eat less during floods in order to control their bowel movements, due to the limited sanitation facilities and lack of privacy. It was stressed that floods forced people to leave the house and sleep on embankments and roads, sharing the space with others, thus posing particular problems for women and girls, who have to be extra careful about their dress and sleeping postures. The problem is even more acute for pregnant, lactating, and menstruating women. Open spaces for defecation are hard to find: women and girls have to walk long distances in groups at night to find suitable places, and this renders them vulnerable to sexual abuse. This aspect has been more effectively managed in areas where preparedness efforts have been going on for a longer time. In one of the field areas, the local partner provided candles and matches for people in flood shelters. However, efforts to tackle unequal household power relations were judged to be inadequately thought-through, and appeared inconsistent at times. For example, although efforts were made to address various problems faced by women in disasters, it is surprising that the assessment tools and reports have not paid adequate attention to gendered power relations. On the other hand, the programme seems to have done well in terms of lobbying other donors to take gender issues into account when designing flood-response work.

Improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian work

Many impact reports this year present details of on-going progress in fully integrating **Sphere standards** in humanitarian programmes, and taking the lead in promoting these with other agencies. This has arguably been most important – certainly very apparent – in our tsunami programmes, given the large numbers of actors.

Oxfam has continued its work to improve accountability to beneficiaries as part of the **Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP-I)** process, which sets out seven principles promoting more accountable humanitarian action. An organisational work-plan has been drawn up and pilot initiatives have been set up in Haiti and Liberia, and most recently in Aceh, Indonesia. Initial findings indicate that pilots have struggled to maintain momentum, as they have to contend with problems generated by staff turnover in key positions, and very fluid working environments. Defining a workable complaints mechanism for beneficiaries continues to prove elusive. The **Haiti** pilot found that consulting on project aims and activities should ideally have taken place in the communities before the start of the project activities, especially in the short-term programme in Mapou, as this would have reduced complaints among recipients and helped us to make timely adjustments. In **Liberia**, Oxfam has been instrumental in facilitating visits by internally displaced people to their home areas so that they can make informed decisions about their return. We have also been instrumental in setting up the Humanitarian Accountability Network (HANet) with seven agencies in **Cambodia**, in which Oxfam's role and leadership are 'enthusiastically endorsed' by its members.

Protection of civilians

Oxfam continues its work in protection, focusing on two main aspects: recognising the key role of humanitarian agencies in supporting existing strategies for the protection of civilians, and designing protection programmes in accordance with desired outcomes rather than activities, in order to improve the likelihood of making maximum impact. This approach is increasingly being adopted in the work of other agencies, appearing for instance in the USAID policy on internal displacement, and in the IDP Division's guidance on protection issued to humanitarian co-ordinators. A new version of the

ALNAP¹⁴ Protection Guidance Booklet (co-authored by Oxfam's protection adviser), was very well received by donors, UN agencies, and NGOs.

In the field, Oxfam is playing a leading role in improving the protection of civilians in key contexts such as Darfur (where we have led on issues such as forced movement and sexual violence, and introduced innovative solutions such as fuel-efficient stoves to reduce risks to women collecting firewood); Colombia (where our main donor, ECHO, uses Oxfam as an advisory reference point on the subject); Liberia (where we have worked on reintegration of people accompanying the armed groups) and Indonesia (where we support efforts to ensure that internally displaced people and refugees return to their home areas in safety and with dignity).

Although violence against civilians caught up in conflict still persists, the terms of debate on protecting civilians are changing. In addition to high-profile campaigning on the threats to civilians in Darfur and other crises, throughout the year Oxfam has been working with the UN and various governments to influence the long preparations for the Millennium Plus Five Summit in September 2005 – aiming for progress to be made there on humanitarian as well as development issues. In December 2004, the report of the UN High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change endorsed a series of recommendations that Oxfam and others had been pressing for – including a proposal to establish as a norm the fact that all governments have a 'responsibility to protect' civilians everywhere. In March 2005, this was supported by Kofi Annan in his proposals for the Summit. If accepted at the Summit, it will represent a historic change in the terms of the international debate – away from the priority traditionally accorded to national sovereignty and towards a rights-based priority for humanitarian protection.

Work within the **UK** focuses on asylum and refugee protection, with two strands: working with refugees and asylum seekers to promote positive representation of them in the media, and developing policy and advocacy on the international dimension of UK and EU asylum policy. Projects in **Scotland** and **Wales** actively engaged refugees and asylum seekers and resulted in increased positive media coverage in both countries. In Wales this has resulted in the evolution of an independent Refugee Voice group which has forged strong links with the media. On the international dimension, Oxfam has produced a report entitled *Foreign Territory: The Internationalisation of EU Asylum Policy*. This report presents an agenda for action at the EU level, using case studies from Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sri Lanka. It highlights the refugee realities of the current politically driven processes by which EU countries seek to shift the burden of asylum-provision overseas, and to deter asylum seekers from reaching Europe. The research process, a high-level Oxfam conference in Brussels, and dissemination of the report have influenced decision makers and provided a strong basis for future advocacy.

Investing in disaster preparedness

An internal evaluation of our work in **Bangladesh** examined Oxfam's contribution to flood-disaster preparedness in the River Basin Programme. While much more research needs to be done, the evaluation team concluded that '*preparedness works*'. Communities observed seemed to have a good understanding of preparedness, certainly in the highly vulnerable Char¹⁵ areas. Led by Village Disaster Committees (VDCs), communities were found to have a sound understanding of the risks and context; they were clear on their roles and responsibilities in a crisis, and they exhibited high levels of ownership and confidence in their own abilities to cope with it. Women are active in the committees, and there are many female committee presidents. Short-term male migration creates opportunities for women to assume greater leadership roles.

Investment by Oxfam for more than ten years has contributed 19 flood shelters (raised sites of 3–5 acres, equipped with wells, latrines, and shelter, where up to 300 families can stay); 64 raised 'cluster'

¹⁴ The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action is an international, interagency forum working to improve learning, accountability and performance across the Humanitarian Sector.

¹⁵ 'Chars' are low-lying islands in rivers.

villages of 20–25 households; and a further 8,000 individual raised homesteads. Oxfam has also provided 33 rescue boats, which this year rescued more than 1,000 people, their livestock, and some belongings trapped by rising floodwaters. Our work to improve communities' preparedness for disasters has also focused on improving early-warning systems through the distribution of small radios to VDCs. Many of the activities (homestead raising and livestock-pen protection) have been supported by the communities themselves, rather than Oxfam or partner organisations. There is anecdotal information to suggest a reduction in asset loss as a result of preparedness work. Positive links between partners, local administration, line ministries, and donors have ensured effective co-ordination and communication.

The Bangladesh country programme had prepared a contingency plan which focused on scaling up the response, strengthening management arrangements, and defining roles and responsibilities for disaster response. The fact that there was a plan in place did help the scale up, but the plan needs further refinement. Contingency planning can be improved to define response criteria, clarify management and reporting roles, encourage contingency planning by partners, and map human and financial resources (see below).

Oxfam's Disaster Management Programme in **Cambodia**, which has been working for five years and is funded by five Oxfam donors, was evaluated. It covers two main components: a core disaster-management programme and the pilot Takeo Flood Mitigation Programme, with a two-year budget of £292,000. The evaluation commented on a range of positive achievements, including strong relationships with the government's national and local disaster-management committees; but it was also found that the programme has been instrumental in setting up village committees which have developed into genuine community institutions, with strong participation by women, and a clear understanding of the relationship between floods and women's health and security. Capacity building has been successful, specifically through the application of practical, participatory learning techniques that reached several hundred trainees. The pilot project in Takeo has been recognised by other NGOs as effective, and it has helped to spread the concept of community-based disaster preparedness in the country and beyond.

At the same time, the reviewers described the pilot project as time-intensive and cost-intensive, even potentially 'over-supported and over-protected', with the long-term partner judged to be highly dependent on Oxfam. It is difficult to make any conclusive judgements on the longer-term effectiveness of the pilot project. People in the 13 villages included have more assets at their disposal and hence feel better prepared, but the extent to which this is an accurate reflection of strengths and capacities built up by the programme can only be assessed after a serious flood has occurred. The programme has absorbed significant Oxfam resources over the years, and an analysis of investment over return has yet to be done.

Gender issues in humanitarian response in Asia

In **Aceh, Indonesia**, the deployment of gender advisers from the start of the response to the tsunami made it possible to influence programme design, assess local government and non-government resources, contribute to assessments and orientation of new staff, and improve co-ordination. The initial programme proposed an emphasis on ensuring that gender analysis and issues were effectively integrated across the programme. It included the training and coaching of staff, and co-ordination with other actors. Support for a specialist Gender Unit located in the government's provincial Women's Empowerment Office (WEO) was planned.

During the second month of the tsunami response, an international gender adviser with experience in Indonesia shifted Oxfam's emphasis to a more intensive accompaniment of staff and direct support for the work of local women's organisations. The prevailing conflict in Aceh and the low capacity of the WEO made it difficult to establish a Gender Unit there. Oxfam's gender advisers focused on co-operating on gender issues with task forces that included other international and national organisations. Through the WEO and national NGOs they work to influence government policy on

relief and reconstruction matters, and they engage in key high-level advocacy activities. There is now a dialogue between government and NGOs on gender issues.

The gender-mainstreaming efforts of the team have created a positive attitude to gender issues and better understanding of ways to act according to fair principles and standards. More women are now employed in the previously, mostly all-male Cash for Work programmes, and women's needs (for underwear, sanitary protection, home implements, etc.) have been recognised and met. Oxfam's media work has strong gender elements, and (in collaboration with UNFPA) we initiated research on the gender-related consequences of the disaster; the research found that a disproportionately high ratio of women and children had been killed. The results will provide an excellent basis for future programming, policy influencing, and media work.

Challenges remain in obtaining coherent information disaggregated by sex; discussion continues on the role of gender advisers in assessments; and we need to clarify Oxfam's approach to the gender-related aspects of resettlement sites. The impetus to co-operate with teams and management on gender initiatives is said to be still perceived as externally motivated, and management attention to gender issues competes with the demands of other programme-quality initiatives, such as Sphere and Humanitarian Accountability.

Research and development in public health, food security, and emergency livelihoods

Oxfam's public-health engineering advisers have continued to review current technologies and practices and research new technologies in emergency water and sanitation provision, in collaboration with other agencies and academic institutions, such as the universities of Loughborough (WEDC), Cranfield, and Surrey.

Results of research in **Liberia** indicate that well-chlorination using local pot chlorinators and locally pressed chlorine is simple, quick, cheap, and probably effective in both a short-term emergency and longer-term projects, especially if it is coupled with adequate support, including training, awareness-raising, and hygiene messages. Research has been carried out on household water filters in **Cambodia** as a point-of-use water-treatment option in emergency situations. So far the filters have been found to be efficient in improving the water quality at household level, easy to use, and durable if well handled. A study in **Darfur**, undertaken by a researcher with field staff and beneficiaries, is expected to produce a synopsis of Oxfam's experiences with the promotion of hand-washing and to provide recommendations for the most appropriate type of equipment and health-promotion methodologies to be used in various scenarios. In collaboration with the International Federation of the Red Cross, UNICEF, and UNHCR, Oxfam is researching and writing a manual on excreta disposal in emergencies. This will advance thinking on how to tackle the problem of emergency excreta disposal in difficult environments such as flooded areas, sites with a high water table, hard-rock sites, and urban environments. The publication should make a significant contribution to the sector.

Food security and emergency livelihoods advisers have completed a trial practical guide on cash-transfer programming. This incorporates learning from Africa, the Caribbean, and countries affected by the tsunami. It shows that cash transfers are an appropriate response to many food and livelihood crises. Advisers have also agreed to work with Save the Children and the World Food Programme in researching and developing criteria for identifying food or cash responses.

Humanitarian policy and advocacy

Through working on the **Good Humanitarian Donorship** initiative, aimed at achieving a positive influence on the behaviour of the humanitarian donor community, we have had access to high-level forums such as the Second International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship in Ottawa in October 2004, where we have been able to contribute our views. Meaningful change will probably take a long time to happen, and continued involvement will be necessary. It is equally clear, however, that this initiative alone will not solve the problem of inadequate and inequitable humanitarian aid,

and this is why Oxfam has supported other reforms proposed by the UK and UN, including an annual fund of US\$1 billion to support people in crises who would otherwise not receive timely assistance. We are contributing to the UN's **Humanitarian Response Review**, reporting in mid-2005, which is considering this and other proposals.

The launch of the latest Oxfam briefing paper on the conflict in the **Palestinian Territories**¹⁶ did not achieve a demonstrable impact, partly because of the lack of sustained lobbying after publication. It was criticised by some Palestinian partners with respect to some aspects of its application of international humanitarian law (IHL). Relying on new legal advice, we have now restated our views on the application of IHL to the conflict, confirming our strong belief in the need to protect Israeli and Palestinian civilians alike. To support our advocacy, Oxfam and the Wilton Park Conference Centre (affiliated to the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office) held a conference on 'Protecting Civilians in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict'. Within the wider conference, Israeli and Palestinian civil-society activists issued a joint statement on civilian protection — the first of its kind. Working with Israeli civil-society organisations has helped to forge a coalition with which Oxfam can work, to inform Israeli public opinion about the cost of conflict and the benefits of peace.

We were invited by the **UN Security Council**, governments, and others to share our experience and views on a wide range of crises, from Haiti to the Middle East, as well as the greatest crises in Africa. Oxfam was regularly invited to speak at important events, including the international conference on Democracy, Terrorism and Security, organised by the Club de Madrid in March 2005 on the anniversary of the terrorist attacks on Madrid in 2004. Oxfam's media and lobbying work concerning the humanitarian crises in Darfur, Uganda, and elsewhere achieved wide coverage and discussion both regionally and globally. However, this progress on advocacy is balanced by the fact that in too many humanitarian crises, governments are failing to do all that they reasonably can to protect and assist civilians. We are clearly not achieving as much as we would like to achieve in current crises — while making some progress in changing the terms of debate on protecting civilians, and in building support for the Arms Trade Treaty (see below).

Oxfam's policy work on the tsunami focused on ensuring access to Aceh for humanitarian agencies, the quality of aid, terms of trade, and the 'double humanitarian pledge' to avoid funds being taken from other crises to fund the tsunami response. We joined others in calling successfully for the US 'Core Group' not to assume leadership in co-ordination but to support UN agencies and governments.

Advocacy for conflict reduction

The **Control Arms Campaign**, led by Oxfam, Amnesty International, and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), made important gains this year. The UK Foreign Secretary announced in March 2005 that the UK government would take a lead in building international support for a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Support for tougher controls on arms transfers also came from the UN Secretary General and his High-Level Panel, the UN Security Council, and the Commission for Africa. Eleven governments have given explicit support for the ATT, and many more are actively engaged in the international debate. The campaign is continuing to work with communities to promote the reduction of armed violence at grassroots level. More than 600 civil-society organisations around the world now support the campaign, with more than 250,000 supporters from 152 countries taking campaign actions.

Oxfam has also been instrumental in pressing for tighter arms controls in regions. In West Africa, Oxfam and IANSA are pressing for the ECOWAS Moratorium on arms transfers to become legally-binding, and Oxfam has worked actively with others in the development of a draft treaty. In the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa, we have worked with governments to strengthen arms transfer controls, and the development of guidelines for arms transfers, which will be the key implementation document for the Nairobi Protocol, a new legally-binding arms control instrument in the region.

¹⁶ Protecting Civilians: A cornerstone of Middle East peace, May 2004

Programming for conflict reduction

Oxfam's Strategic Review of its Global Conflict Reduction Programme¹⁷ was completed this year. It found that Oxfam's work is often initiated and driven by local staff and communities, as conflict continues to affect many of their lives on a very personal level. The findings of the review suggest that if Oxfam is going to develop a distinctive competence in conflict-reduction work, it will most likely be through the integration of such work with its other activities.

Oxfam programming is increasingly taking this form. In **Rwanda** the peace-building programme focuses on livelihoods, good governance, and gender and diversity issues. In **Kenya** the peace-building programme has forged close and mutually beneficial links with the pastoralist programme. In **Guatemala** a new Oxfam programme, being developed by a local counterpart IEPADES, combines education, gender equity, and the right to be heard with conflict reduction. In **Cambodia** programming on conflict reduction has focused largely on reducing the availability and use of weapons, using local peace-building practice with links to Buddhist traditions to help people to manage conflict non-violently. This work has strong advocacy components and also supports the Control Arms campaign.

Conflict reduction in the Horn, East, and Central Africa region (HECA)

The HECA region continues to lead the way in conflict-reduction work in Oxfam, and is perhaps the region that best illustrates the viability of an integrated approach. This has resulted in excellent programmes in **Kenya** and **Rwanda** in particular, as well as regional influence on policy, and continental influence with the African Union on matters of peace and security. The HECA programme piloted Conflict Sensitivity Training in Humanitarian Response for staff in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**. **Kenya**, **South Sudan**, and **North Sudan** led in raising support for the Million Faces initiative of the Control Arms Campaign.

Integrated peace-building programmes in **Kenya** have worked closely with Oxfam's pastoralist and educational programmes. These programmes have had a significant effect at community level. Local and district peace committees and a National Steering Committee in the Office of the President have been established and supported, and have played an increasingly significant role in resolving disputes involving armed actors. These programmes have also been influential in shaping government policy, resulting in cross-border peace-building links, particularly through the pastoralist programme. They have also influenced government policy on arms control and support for the Arms Trade Treaty. In the process, particular attention has been paid to women's empowerment initiatives. The lessons and challenges of this programme have been published in *Peace Building Activities in the Arid Districts Of Kenya*. These learning activities have strengthened the likelihood that peace committees, which have been supported by traditional structures but have lacked legal recognition, will receive appropriate policy support and legal cover from the government.

The **Rwanda** Peace Building Programme, which uses gender, good governance, and small-scale economic development and livelihoods projects as a basis for its activities, is notable for leading the way in which gender considerations are fully integrated in a peace-building programme. Staff and communities receive gender-awareness training, and every aspect of the programme has gender indicators. Gender equity is a requirement for participation in training events and community projects. For example, four of seven criteria for the selection of participants for a training programme are gender-specific. In addition, gender is mainstreamed in the training manual and training materials, and domestic violence is mainstreamed as one type of conflict. All information about communities is disaggregated by sex, and the programme is finding ways to increase the access of women to productive resources. The Rwanda programme has been innovative in the training of non-literate

¹⁷ A Strategic Review assesses an area of Oxfam's programme work, and is undertaken by internal and external evaluators.

women in conflict management and peace-building skills. A significant number of these women have become trusted resource people in their communities, and some have been selected to serve in representative positions on provincial mediation panels or as members of the Gacaca courts.¹⁸

A number of factors have enabled the region's leadership in conflict programming, including senior staff support, dedicated advisory capacity, and cadres of experienced local programme staff. Learning is shared, for example the Rwanda conflict management training manual was extensively used in the development of the South Sudan manual. The experience of the Pastoralist and Kenya peace-building programmes have informed the decision by South Sudan to support the development of local peace structures and integrate these with local government, as well as the decision to mainstream conflict programming into other programming streams. HECA's conflict reduction programmes are characterised by a willingness to innovate.

There are a number of challenges that could threaten programming, such as recruitment gaps that reduce continuity. The North and South Sudan programmes have decided to mainstream conflict sensitivity, but have not fully worked out what this will mean in technical or programming terms, and the programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo struggles to provide sufficient energy or resources.

Our campaigning against arms is increasingly being seen as part of our work to protect civilians from the tools of violence – in support of humanitarian assistance programmes therefore, as well as our conflict reduction programmes. Research is planned in a number of Regions in 2005–6 on the impact of the uncontrolled arms trade on the protection of civilians.

Lessons, issues, and risks

Effectiveness

- Ratings of our performance by programme staff still often show that they rate our impact on people's lives more highly than our performance on matters of sustainability or participation, or our success in changing policies, practices, ideas, and beliefs. The reasons for this, in situations where immediate and sometimes continuing needs are acute, are obvious and understandable. However, reports also continued to note difficulties in 'proving' our impact, partly because of the failure to set indicators of impact at the design stage of programmes or to monitor effectively against these.
- Hard choices have been made in **prioritisation** of emergencies, inevitably leading to less support for on-going or smaller-scale programmes, and indeed in some cases drawing key staff away from them. It is unclear at this point what impact this had on these relief efforts.
- There is concern that Oxfam is not always clear and consistent in its expectations in the first phase of a humanitarian response, and there are tensions between adopting a 'default' position of focusing resources on public health, and seeking to integrate quality and mainstreaming work. In Aceh, for the first time technical advisers were joined by experts in gender, Sphere standards, and accountability. It will be important to assess how the programme manages these potential complexities over the course of this year.
- An OCHA¹⁹ report, evaluating response to the Darfur crisis, recommended organisations to ensure that all staff understand the humanitarian principles and key policies of their agency. Oxfam's document entitled 'What is Oxfam Doing in Darfur?' was recommended as a good model.

¹⁸ Courts set up to deal with perpetrators of the Genocide.

¹⁹ OCHA – UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Organisational issues

- The very high demands placed on the organisation by the succession of **large-scale crises** have challenged teams at every level. Arguably however, the painful experience of scaling up for crisis-response in Darfur and Chad was recent enough to make a direct, positive impact on Oxfam's performance in mobilising for response to the tsunami in what was – and is – a truly organisation-wide effort.
- As a result of these reflections, a **Humanitarian Investment Plan** has been drawn up. It focuses on creating the right internal climate and levels of competence to improve Oxfam's performance over the coming year. This work will include reviewing Oxfam's standard operating procedures in major emergencies in order to streamline finance, logistics, and systems. There is also increased confidence in improved tools and approaches to Human Resources management, and a less risk-averse approach in offering longer contracts to improve staff-retention in key positions. These developments were coupled with an attitude that encouraged managers not to under-estimate staffing needs in order to reduce commonly experienced problems (such as critical personnel gaps, avoidable delays in set-up and implementation, and pressure on over-stretched implementing staff). While care must be exercised in comparing very different contexts, it does feel that generic lessons have been effectively learned.
- Increased efforts have been made to capture learning at various points in the programme cycle in different countries, instead of the usual practice of placing emphasis on evaluations that normally take place well into, or at the end of, the programme. Real Time Evaluation exercises took place in Darfur and Chad, and in the early stages of the tsunami response. We need to ensure that these processes are more overtly linked to management review and decision-making.
- Following discussions with six international NGOs,²⁰ Oxfam GB has entered into a two-year collaborative initiative, the **Emergency Capacity Building Project**, funded by the Gates Foundation. The project aims to assess and improve practice within the seven agencies and the wider sector in three areas: recruitment, development and retention of staff; improving accountability and impact assessment; and improving emergency-preparedness work.

Policy issues

- Levels of global humanitarian aid in 2004 were lower than in 2003, and no more equitably distributed. The initiative for **Good Humanitarian Donorship** that Oxfam has significantly supported has not yet had a measurable impact on this trend. There is little evidence yet that the unprecedented public generosity in response to the tsunami, or Oxfam's call to donors to make a so-called 'double humanitarian pledge', has leveraged additional government resources for other humanitarian crises. There is more reason to think that there may be lasting benefits from the widespread recognition that governmental donors and the humanitarian sector together performed unsatisfactorily in Darfur in 2004. This has stimulated the UK and the UN to make radical proposals for reform, with implications for both the UN and donors, which Oxfam is supporting.
- Within Oxfam, there continue to be tensions in setting priorities for our humanitarian campaigning, because the scale of need far surpasses the resources, in Regions or headquarters, devoted to humanitarian campaigning. For most of 2004–5, Darfur dominated this work, with both the Region and headquarters struggling to deploy sufficient resources in other crises, including Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2005, the tsunami initially diverted effort away from other crises, before tsunami-dedicated resources allowed staff based at headquarters to resume the previous level of work on Sudan.

²⁰ Care, CRS, IRC, Mercy Corps, Save the Children US, and World Vision.

- During the year, major sister agencies withdrew from Afghanistan and Sudan as a result of insecurity and the lack of sufficient safe 'humanitarian space' to operate. All international agencies face this overall challenge, in environments where it is increasingly easy to be perceived as 'Western' rather than impartial and humanitarian.
- The year saw some marked success in the preparations for the Millennium Plus Five Summit. This was achieved with quick, short responses to key opportunities, and related lobbying. Extending such initiatives beyond London, Geneva, New York, and Washington remains a priority.
- The strategic challenge of our arms campaigning is to work within the UN process on small arms, because it is the starting point for almost any further progress on global arms controls, at the same time as building momentum for an eventual Arms Trade Treaty, legally binding and applicable to all conventional arms, which is a far more ambitious target than that envisaged in the current UN negotiations. We are currently able to do both, and we are not likely to have to fundamentally review our strategy until the UN small-arms conference in July 2006.
- It has been possible to achieve wide-ranging popular support for the **Arms Trade Treaty** in some countries (North and South) where we have invested in campaigning on arms, and through this to make real progress in pressurising governments to make positive change. However, we need to make a gear-shift in terms of building alliances and involving more organisations, particularly in strategic countries, that include India, South Africa, Brazil, USA, and Egypt.

3 The right to a sustainable livelihood

The changes that we want to see in the world

Our aim is to ensure the right of people to have food and income security in a way that is sustainable — for their future and for the environment.

The priority is to work with others to shift the power imbalances in local, national, and international markets, which are a fundamental cause of poverty for millions of people. This involves building the capacity of poor farmers and workers to participate in markets, and campaigning to change trade policies and rules in favour of poor people.

Progress towards our objectives

Highlights

- *Supporting improvements in productivity, involving the most vulnerable.* In Malawi, for example, 37,000 poor women and men farmers have increased their production of maize, their staple crop, by more than 200 per cent since adopting low-cost, environment-friendly agricultural practices; the most vulnerable members of communities have been supported to start activities to earn some income.
- *Supporting producers to gain more power in markets.* In Ghana, for example, 15,600 members of a producers' network have increased their sales, on average, by 35 per cent. In Albania, since the formation of an association of herb collectors two years ago, the 4,000 members have increased their cash income two to three times.
- *Campaigning for labour rights.* In nine countries where campaigns on labour rights are being supported, labour regulations have been strengthened. In several countries, there are shifts in employers' compliance with labour laws.
- *Supporting Southern governments to protect the interests of poor people in international negotiations.* The WTO ruled that some US cotton subsidies and EU sugar subsidies are illegal. Campaigning by Oxfam and others creates an atmosphere that supports developing countries to take forward complaints, and puts pressure on offending governments to comply.
- *Shifting the terms of debate on trade.* UK government policy on trade has become significantly more development-focused in the last year, but shifts in the EU position in WTO trade negotiations are now needed.

As we said in our Programme Impact Report last year, 'business as usual' is not an option in some countries, especially in Africa, where recurrent droughts and HIV/AIDS, together with a range of other social, economic, and political factors, are changing the face of poverty. 'Humanitarian' and 'development' labels need to be questioned, and we need to make a bigger contribution to finding new approaches and partnerships to address the impact of HIV/AIDS. We begin this chapter by considering several assessments conducted this year which studied programmes in areas of chronic vulnerability, to see what lessons we can draw from long-standing work and new initiatives.

We then assess progress in a number of country programmes that aim to support people living in poverty to gain access to markets and the power to negotiate a fair return. Supporting poor women and men to acquire secure assets and build secure institutions is an essential part of this work.

Generally, advocacy and campaigning are becoming stronger within country programmes, and are sometimes an integral part of Oxfam's global *Make Trade Fair* campaign, launched in 2002. Previous Programme Impact Reports have charted progress on early international campaign priorities, including the crisis in the global coffee market, and on patent rules and the cost of medicines. This year we describe the progress of our campaigning with others on labour rights and trade policies and rules.

Facing the challenge in areas of chronic vulnerability

Oxfam teams from a number of countries in our Southern Africa Region and Horn, East, and Central Africa Region are taking part in an initiative which seeks to develop the way in which we operate in areas of chronic vulnerability. Within this initiative, we are carrying out in-depth livelihood assessments, developing early-warning systems for food insecurity, and developing livelihoods programmes which have the capacity to respond to acute needs in crises.

Programme-impact assessments this year from Kenya, North Sudan, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi illustrate some of the challenges that we face in these areas, and elements of innovation and useful experience.

Oxfam has similar histories of food-security programming in North Sudan and Kenya, starting with involvement in large-scale food distributions in the mid-1980s. Oxfam's approach has gradually evolved over the years to meet food needs and protect livelihoods through a number of different interventions.

Oxfam's **Kenya** team works with the government and other agencies to put in place a national food-security system. Oxfam staff who work with our long-term programmes with pastoralist communities in the Turkana and Wajir Districts are involved in making food-security assessments, and planning and implementing humanitarian assistance when required. We saw last year that our assessments, together with good national co-ordination, enabled us to make a timely and effective humanitarian response. This assisted more than 330,000 people at a cost of about £5.5m (including distributions in kind). We are also gradually increasing cash transfers, in preference to food aid when appropriate, within our responses.

In Red Sea State, **North Sudan**, Oxfam implements a Community Situation Indicator (CSI) system. The programme started in 1996. A mobile team collects data from 23 sentinel sites. The involvement of local volunteers is a unique strength of the system, compared with others in North Sudan. However, although it is the only early-warning system in Red Sea State, the information collected has not generally been used by agencies other than Oxfam. The development of the system has suffered from a lack of assured, long-term technical support and funding, and the commitment of other CSI Steering Group members (government, WFP, other international NGOs) has consequently remained poor. Looking ahead, this is a situation where a greater degree of integration with the work of Oxfam's long-term pastoralist team, and the involvement of other agencies already operating in the sentinel sites, could strengthen the system and also make it more cost-effective. A project which combines a humanitarian response to meet immediate needs for food and other items with livelihoods support to pastoralists and other groups will be implemented during the coming year.

In both humanitarian and livelihoods programmes, efforts are being made to find approaches which support local markets while providing assistance to vulnerable people. In Chapter 2 of this report, the case study on the humanitarian response to the crises in Haiti last year describes the use of cash and vouchers schemes to achieve this objective. In our programmes in Aceh, Sri Lanka, and India, following the tsunami, cash transfers have been a major component of our initial response. These initiatives (such as cash-for-work for road repairs) have greatly accelerated recovery by enabling affected populations to return home and get income-generating and productive activities going as quickly as possible, for instance setting up community groups to sew clothes, or clean land for planting rice. These programmes are now turning into longer-term livelihoods programmes through micro-finance initiatives and support for small-scale business.

In **Zimbabwe**, as part of our on-going livelihoods programme, a voucher methodology that had been used for livestock and seed fairs was pilot-tested at food fairs during the lean period of the year in 2004–05. Local traders and individual households were identified to supply the goods and sell at the fairs, and 6,000 of the most vulnerable households in the area were given vouchers for making purchases. Selected households included those where orphans are living, or someone is chronically ill, or a vulnerable woman heads the household. Some poorer households also benefited from the boost that the fairs provided for local trade. For example, one recently widowed woman with four children had closed her trading post because of the slump in the local market. The fairs enabled her to re-open her business and sell additional items such as soap, toothpaste, salt, sugar, and other basic household items. And some people who had acquired chickens through the fairs in the previous year had been able to rear enough to sell some this time round. Staff learned that monitoring of the market is important when voucher schemes are used. Shortage of food supplies in the market in February led to price rises and reduced the amount of food that the recipients of vouchers could afford. The value of the voucher had to be reviewed.

In a new initiative in **Zambia**, instead of buying seeds from outside the livelihood programme area to assist vulnerable households, Oxfam is supporting the local agricultural economy by promoting local production and marketing of seeds.²¹ Sixteen farmers, and staff from six of Oxfam's partner organisations,²² have been trained as seed inspectors, and 190 farmers are involved in growing seed. About one third of the seed growers are women. The main reason why more are not involved is their lack of animal traction. In the first year of the programme, 600 households were given seed packs, and a 'pay-back' system was used to promote sustainability of the scheme. Other efforts to make seed growing a sustainable enterprise include support for the seed growers to form associations, and training in marketing and hosting seed fairs. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Seed Certification and Control Institute have been collaborating closely with the project to promote standards and procedures. The policy environment for this initiative is therefore good. However, an assessment of its first phase identified a number of weaknesses that need to be addressed, and we still need to make a thorough assessment of the economic sustainability and viability of the concept of community-based seed growers.

The case study below, from the Shire Highlands in Malawi, is about one of Oxfam's largest livelihoods programmes. It is well established, but it has had to continue to innovate in response to the impact of HIV in the area, as well as environmental challenges. Key areas of interest in this programme are the way in which it has promoted community structures to ensure that the most vulnerable households are included in development activities; the way in which partnerships to promote care and treatment for people affected by HIV complement initiatives to protect and support their livelihood activities; and the ways in which the programme is working with local government staff and communities to promote greater accountability of government and citizen involvement in shaping local development.

Vulnerable livelihoods in the Shire Highlands of Malawi

Over the past four years, the Shire Highlands Sustainable Livelihoods Programme has reached out to more than a quarter of a million people living in 233 villages in the Districts of Mulanje, Thyolo, and Phalombe. District government agencies, a number of NGOs, and community-based organisations are Oxfam's main partners in the implementation of the programme. Women and men have changed the way they farm and, importantly, have become active citizens in the development of their area. Communities are taking responsibility for ensuring that vulnerable households are included in developments.

²¹ In particular early-maturing, Open Pollinated Varieties (OPVs) of maize, which can be recycled without losing their efficacy.

²² Land and Development Association, Institute of Cultural Affairs of Zambia, People's Participation Services, Women for Change, Keeper Zambia Foundation, and Young Women's Christian Association.

Farmers who have adopted low-cost, environment-friendly, agricultural techniques have seen production of maize, the staple food, increase by more than 200 per cent (from 500 kg to 1,600 kg per hectare) over a period of several years. Production levels do however vary from year to year, depending on the rains. There are 37,000 households — 40 per cent of which are headed by a woman — now using these technologies.

Initiatives have been taken to provide people with a good source of protein in their diet, as well as a new source of income. Farmers have been supported to establish fishponds. One thousand two hundred farmers now have fishponds in Thyolo District, 800 of them supported by the programme. Three and a half thousand vulnerable households, including those headed by children and those where someone is chronically ill, have acquired chickens, guinea fowl, or goats through revolving loan schemes. Thirteen-year-old John Eliasi, for example, dropped out of school after his parents died. He was chosen by his Village Development Committee to receive a goat, which has now given birth to two kids. Some households now have a goat-holding of ten. Research has shown that people who have livestock are significantly less vulnerable to ill health, and cope better through times of food shortage.

Women are earning money from owning livestock and from other activities, and are able to decide how to use the cash. Illiterate women are learning to read and write, and this is helping them gain respect from their communities, and take on new positions of responsibility. The skills that they are gaining are critical as they engage increasingly in petty trade.

Almost 12,000 households affected by HIV are receiving support from local volunteers under a Home-based Care scheme, run by the Social Welfare Department and 27 community-based organisations. Through Oxfam's collaboration with Médecins sans Frontières, people can also be referred for counselling and treatment at health centres and clinics. Both children and adults are benefiting. Some children have been able to go back to school, and some chronically ill women and men have been able to work in their fields, do light work at home, or start activities to raise income.

During the lean period in 2004–05, when food was scarce, villages identified 11,000 of the most vulnerable households to receive food. WFP contributed food for 7,000, and Oxfam supported the remainder.

Health centres report that the incidence of water-borne diseases has dropped now that 35,000 households have greater access to potable water. Bore holes have been drilled or rehabilitated, shallow wells have been protected, and a gravity-piped water system has been built.

What is helping to ensure that all members of the communities benefit from this programme and that the process of development continues? The programme starts in each village with the community assessing its problems and possible solutions, and drawing up an action plan. A Village Development Committee (VDC) is chosen, consisting of equal numbers of women and men members. Two of its members are elected to represent the interests of households that might be marginalised and left out of programme interventions. A key part of the programme is the development of people's knowledge, skills, and capacities: for example, introducing new farming techniques; teaching women to read and write; raising awareness about hygiene and disease, HIV, gender inequalities, and violence against women. Communities and service providers learn about the rights of all citizens. VDCs are trained to manage money and projects, and to bid for new funds. Women VDC leaders are given assertiveness training to help them to participate effectively in decision making.

The programme actively supports the Districts to fulfil their new powers within the government's decentralisation process. For example, Oxfam decided that its 'general initiative fund' for community projects of up to £500 should now be incorporated within the District Assembly's new District Development Fund. Initiatives have been taken which help to strengthen the accountability of the District Assemblies and local service providers: Radio Listening Clubs provide communities with the opportunity to discuss issues, problems, and ways to improve local services; expenditures from the District Development Funds are now posted on notice boards.

In 2004–05, the budget for the Shire Highlands programme was about £1m (excluding the WFP food contribution). It reached more than a quarter of a million people through the activities described. Advocacy work has benefited other sections of the community too: for instance, approximately 80,000 employees on tea plantations in Mulanje and Thyolo can now join unions. The strategies adopted, and partnerships formed, all aim to contribute to the programme's cost-effectiveness and build relationships and structures that will allow the communities to continue their development.

The scope of the Shire Highlands programme is already broad, but increasing levels of vulnerability due to HIV present on-going challenges, alongside the threats of drought, crop diseases, and pests. In these areas of chronic and multiple vulnerabilities, we need to continue to innovate and share learning between programmes. We need to learn with others about how we can respond most effectively, and use our experience in advocacy for policy changes that will promote fundamental change and development in these areas.

Gaining experience in the marketplace

'What has been achieved for now is like planting a tree, and growing a tree, but the tree still needs to fruit. Oxfam should wait to see the fruiting' (Affamah Asariga, Member of TOPAN and chairperson of the Basket Weavers' Group, Ghana).

Most of Oxfam's programmes that support poor women and men to gain access to markets and get a fair return are still relatively new. As we and our partners know, it takes time to build sustainable businesses. Many of our market programmes have not yet reached that stage, and we also have much to learn to help us to strategise effectively with partners and facilitate their access to appropriate business support. However, there are many examples from Oxfam's programmes across the world of women and men finding new market opportunities, and beginning to gain a better return from local, national, and international markets. We shall illustrate this from programmes that have supported poor producers to market herbs in Albania, mussels in Viet Nam, and shea butter from Ghana to the USA and UK. We shall briefly look at some of our work with coffee farmers. We see from the case studies below that effective organisation of small-scale producers is necessary in order to access markets and influence political institutions, at the local level and beyond.

We reported on Oxfam's Livelihoods and Market Access Programme in Albania last year, so we can now look at how it has progressed. We find that, as time goes on, the positive results achieved at the local level are opening up opportunities for exerting a wider influence within the country, and the programme is contributing to Oxfam's global campaigning. The programme started in 2002. It reaches out to about 20,000 people living in poor areas, both mountainous and lowland districts, of the country. It is helping them to progress beyond mere subsistence and a reliance on insecure sources of income, such as remittances from young men who have migrated. The programme started by helping women and men to form associations and to market a range of products, including herbs, forest fruits, teas, wine, milk, and honey.

Juggling apples and potatoes in Tirana, Albania

The Drini Valley Herb Association, in Shkodra Region, Albania, now has more than 4,000 members. They collect medicinal herbs, forest fruits, and teas, and they have

seen their cash income grow two to three times since the Association was established, less than two years ago. The business has created jobs in collecting, selecting, and processing produce, and in building, transporting, and marketing it. A key to the Association's success has been the creation of a stable supply of produce for traders. The energy that members have put into organising all stages of the operation, and their ownership of the enterprise from the beginning, has been fundamental to their success. A strong sense of community in the villages has brought women, men, and young people into activities. Traditionally, women carry out most manual agricultural activities in Albania. Through this programme, they are now involved in jobs that earn income, such as working in the herb-processing unit. Men, on the other hand, are working as herb collectors, and are sharing in household duties when their wife is earning money outside the home. Women are less likely than men to be involved in advocacy activities at this stage, however.

The agricultural fairs that Oxfam has organised in Tirana have produced good immediate sales for producer groups from across the country, and have led to contracts being agreed. Last year, more than 40 per cent of participants were able to conclude a deal with wholesalers and traders in the capital. In October 2004 the agricultural fair was held, together with a Make Trade Fair concert, in the main square in Tirana. The solidarity between the citizens of Tirana and poor farmers from rural areas was evident. Thousands of people visited the fair, signed up for the '*Big Noise*', and purchased goods. The Circus of Tirana took part in the concert, juggling with apples and potatoes. Hundreds of young people attended.

On the day when the fair opened, the Ministry of Agriculture invited Oxfam and farmers' associations to speak at a forum about their experiences of organising farmers. Following this, regional discussion about farmers' associations and co-operatives is being promoted through the Ministry's annual plan for 2005.

Three regions of the country, Shkodra, Tirana, and Vlora, have now incorporated agricultural development priorities in their regional strategies. In Shkodra, the strategy includes priorities raised by the Rural Forum, which Oxfam has promoted. The Drini Valley Herb Association was presented in the Shkodra Region's 2015 strategy document as a model of farmers' organisation. In Tirana and Vlora, Oxfam has been invited by the regional councils to help them to develop strategies for reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

Poor infrastructure within Albania threatens the success of poor farmers' enterprises. Inadequate roads increase marketing costs, and an unstable electricity supply means that processing technology cannot be introduced in many areas. There is the need for strong national policies in favour of the development of small-scale agriculture, protection for small-scale producers as markets become more open, and good access to business advice and market analysis to support the development of their enterprises. Stronger advocacy at EU level is also required.

The total costs of all programme strategies since 2002 are about £365,000. Taking a figure of 20,000 people being directly reached, this would amount to about £18 per person over three years. Taking the Drini Valley Herb Association project alone, it is calculated that the cost per person benefiting is about £5 over the three years. The advocacy and campaigning work is contributing to benefits on a wider scale. Modest initial investments have been made in this programme for the results achieved, and many associations have invested part of their profits to improve irrigation, water or health clinic facilities, broadening the impact to communities.

One of Oxfam's programmes in Viet Nam also shows synergy between local work with poor communities and efforts to influence national policy. The programme encourages the government to ensure that poor communities have access to the assets they need in order to undertake productive activities. Access to coastal and forest resources is the main focus of work, together with access to technical advice and affordable financial services. One project within the programme supports poor women and men who have little or no land to raise mussels.

Raising mussels in Duyen Hai District, Viet Nam

Three mussel-raising clubs have been formed in Duyen Hai District, Tra Vinh, Viet Nam. The Duyen Hai District People's Committee implements the project through a project-management board. Oxfam has provided support for a revolving loan fund, with members charged a monthly management fee of 0.3 per cent of the loan. Working with local government authorities, Oxfam has also supported members to develop their production techniques and marketing skills.

The market for mussels is growing within Viet Nam and internationally, and the 122 members of the first two clubs to be formed are making good profits from selling mussels. Last year, this was equal to about five months' income for a poor household. Raising mussels is not very time-consuming. Members of the clubs can therefore continue with other activities that bring in income alongside mussel farming.

The club leaders and the District government have taken active steps to ensure that poorer households are not left out, and that they benefit as much as possible as club members. Initially, the clubs asked members to take turns to act as volunteer guards. This meant that each household needed to make someone available for about three days a month. Then clubs decided to pay for guards, and one club paid members from poor households to take on this job, giving them additional income. Once there were paid guards, it was easier for households like Mrs Hong's to be involved. She is a widow who did not join the club when it was set up, because there was no one in her family to help to guard the mussels. Nor could she afford to take the risk that mussel farming might not be profitable. By the second year she could see members gaining a good profit, and the barrier of having to find someone to help to guard the mussels had also been removed. She was pleased therefore when the club leaders approached her, inviting her to join.

Action was also taken to help poorer households when it was found that they had been the least successful in using their profits from mussel farming to earn further income. As the main reason for failure in new enterprises seemed to be a lack of technical knowledge and skills, club representatives and District officials decided that the clubs should identify the training needs of members, and that extension workers would respond to these after each harvest.

Women have become more involved in market transactions, making decisions and taking on positions of leadership through being involved in the clubs. In Hiep Thanh Commune, the chair, accountant, and cashier of the club are all women. Within the home, however, it seems that women's and men's roles have not changed.

For the project to be possible at all, the local communities needed access to coastal land, which at the time was being rented to entrepreneurs from other provinces. The clubs were given this access, but as yet without any formal written agreement from the District People's Committee. National land and fishery law does allow for people who have no land, or little land, to be given access to unused resources, but first these need to be measured and appraised. As part of Oxfam's wider programme, the Tra Vinh Province Department of Natural Resources and Environment is being given support to make this assessment of coastal lands. It is expected that a policy about permanent land allocation to groups of poor farmers and fishers will then follow.

The success of the clubs is leading to other positive developments through government support. The People's Committee of Hiep Thanh has decided to establish another mussel club, and is assisting poor households to access a bank loan without collateral, and at an affordable rate.

In 2003–04, the cost of the project was £22,465. The revolving fund amounted to 86 per cent of this; 5 per cent was for management costs and 9 per cent for training. The profit generated in 2004 has already exceeded the management and training costs for the project. Profits in the coming year, when the three clubs are all harvesting mussels, are expected to be considerably higher, and will more than cover all the project costs. Mussel farming is certainly more profitable than most other activities that the members undertake, so the benefits for them are substantial. The project is also making a contribution to bringing about the wider changes that the programme aims to achieve.

In some other countries, Oxfam is supporting the development of networks to help poor producers to access appropriate business services, exchange market information, and, by working together, gain a stronger voice.

A producers' network in Ghana

MAPRONET, a network of 42 organisations with 15,600 members from a wide range of producer groups, was established in 2001 with Oxfam's support. The network helps producer groups to test ideas, share market information, and access appropriate market services. It has joined in advocacy with others to petition for the formulation of a National Trade Policy for Ghana, leading to countrywide consultation in the development of a policy that was launched in February 2005. Lobbying with others, using evidence from other countries to counter arguments that water privatisation leads to investment in improving water systems and benefits poor communities, was also successful in preventing the sale of the Ghana Water Company.

Generally, producer groups have been able to increase their sales and earnings by about 35 per cent since they joined MAPRONET, but the marketing opportunities for the different groups vary enormously. Shea butter, for instance, has a strong and growing international market. One hundred and eighteen women from Bolgatanga who make shea butter exported 20 tonnes to the USA and UK in 2004, compared with just three tonnes before they joined MAPRONET in 2002. There are also groups of basket makers and hat weavers involved in MAPRONET. Weaving hats, which have more value than baskets, was previously the preserve of men, while women wove baskets. It is encouraging that mixed groups of women and men weavers of hats and baskets have now emerged. However, the market for baskets is not stable, and MAPRONET is investigating the possibility of communities regulating production themselves in order to control the market.

Women and men appreciate the benefits of their membership of the producer groups, and MAPRONET. One woman describes how the increase in their income is benefiting their families: *'Before.....we were sitting in our houses with only a skirt without a top, waiting 'til cooking time for what may be provided by our husbands. My first child did not go to school because of school fees....I now have an acre of rice and another plot planted with tomatoes, and I am now able to sustain myself, pay my other children's school fees, and eat well'* (Affamah Asariga, Chairperson of the Basket Weavers' Association of Nyariga, Ghana).

Assessment of MAPRONET's work has provided useful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the network. For instance, having such a wide range of producer groups in the network has increased the costs of providing support, and limited the amount of learning that could take place between groups. Giving advocacy organisations and producer groups the same status within the network is another issue raised, because this approach has not helped to empower poor producers. The experience from Ghana is helping the development of similar work with producers in Nigeria.

Moving forward, Oxfam will need to support MAPRONET to find ways of becoming financially sustainable. Currently 97 per cent of the network's funding comes from Oxfam and Comic Relief. This amounted to about £70,000 in 2004–05, for support to 15,600 members and wider benefits that come from advocacy.

Our work with coffee farmers over the years is a good example of how poor producers can become major protagonists in international campaigning for change. Oxfam GB and other Oxfams have supported coffee farmers in a number of countries, for example Haiti, Honduras, Peru, and Ethiopia, in the development of co-operatives and networks; improvements in production, including organic production; entry into markets, including Fairtrade and organic markets, the development of skills in

advocacy and campaigning. The establishment of the Global Alliance on Commodities and Coffee (GLACC) at the beginning of Oxfam's global campaigning on coffee in 2002 has strengthened coffee producers' voice further. Nineteen national networks of coffee organisations are now members of GLACC, and the alliance represents small-scale producers within the major global initiatives (the Common Code for the Coffee Community (CCCC) and the Sustainable Coffee Partnership) that are seeking to resolve the global coffee crisis.

National campaigning in coffee-producing countries as part of the global campaign is also raising public awareness about unfair global trading systems. In Ethiopia, popular campaigning about the global coffee crisis resulted in two million people signing Oxfam's global 'Big Noise' petition in 2004. Coffee farmers' unions led the campaign, together with members of Oxfam International in Ethiopia, and PANOS Ethiopia. About 1.3 million coffee farmers signed petitions. Almaz Emisho, a single mother of three children, and a member of the Konga coffee co-operative in Yirgachefe District, says: *'At first I was confused when they asked me to sign a paper. After listening to the explanations, I was convinced that I had to sign....I even encouraged our women members and my neighbours to do the same, and all of them have signed....All of us felt we were not alone after that. That we could get some support from outside.'* Other groups were drawn into the campaign. Alemu Kidane, a university student, says: *'I never had that much knowledge about our coffee. Can you believe that ...I even laughed at the very idea of campaigning for price improvement when I heard about it the first time..... Now my understanding is different, thanks to this Big Noise campaign.'*

Coffee producers see positive developments resulting from actions by national governments and consumers, as well as the international players. In some countries, changes in national coffee policies are giving coffee producers better access to credit and assets to improve productivity and the quality of their product. And coffee farmers in many co-operatives and associations are obtaining better returns in the market. In Honduras, for instance, the 10,000 members of the Central de Co-operativas Cafetaleras de Honduras (CCCH) have achieved the highest unit price for coffee among 21 exporters in the country, and sales worth US\$5.3m during the past coffee year.

Access to financial services

We see from many programmes how access to financial services, and other support services, can really make a difference to the lives of poor women and men. Poor people use lending, savings, or remittances to manage household income and expenses, as well as to build businesses. But financial services are often inaccessible or inappropriate because of their location, the fees charged, or the amounts of money involved — minimum savings levels or loans may be too large or small — or because of stringent requirements for loan use, repayment, or collateral. In a number of our programmes we see producers struggling to access large enough loans to build production and marketing operations to a sufficient size to enable them to negotiate fair terms in the market.

The need to tackle poor people's lack of access to affordable, relevant, financial services extends across the world, in the North and South. When poor people resort to lenders outside mainstream or community services, extortionate rates of interest are often charged. As it is expensive to provide small financial services to very poor and rural users, Oxfam-supported micro-finance institutions are challenged by competing aims of maintaining operational sustainability and maintaining access to poorer clients. Advocacy at regional and national level for the development of micro-finance services is critical in many places, but is little developed in Oxfam's programme. Assessment of programmes in Georgia, Mauritania, and the UK illustrate some of the challenges.

In Georgia, Oxfam's micro-finance partner, the Small Business Development Foundation (SBDF), has made it a priority to work towards becoming a sustainable institution. It has also begun to widen the range of its loan products, in order to extend the market opportunities that are open to poor people. Advocacy for the development of micro-finance services nationally is part of this programme, and some positive changes in policy are taking place.

Micro-finance and business-services support in Samegrelo, West Georgia

The Small Business Development Foundation (SBDF), which was formed in 2001, now has about 1,400 loan clients, and has been developing its products and services as experience has been gained.

It was a client of SBDF's existing micro-finance service who identified kiwi fruit as a cost-effective crop to grow and sell. However, kiwi vines take three–four years to grow to maturity. This meant that SBDF's one-year loan scheme would not enable farmers to engage in this profitable new activity. In 2002, a two-year loan with a lower interest rate was therefore introduced for growing kiwi. The farmers were allowed to use 20 per cent of the loan for other income-generation activities, to help to give them a stable income throughout the year. As a result, 43 farmers have been given support to grow kiwi, and there is a huge demand now for these loans. A modest prediction is that a kiwi farmer could earn up to US\$6,100 a year in the future. Nineteen permanent jobs, and about 100 seasonal jobs, have been created through the initiative. These jobs attract US\$140 a month (which is higher than the minimum, monthly consumption basket for a household of four in the region, according to the Georgia State Department of Statistics, 2003).

SBDF's objective of becoming operationally stable has been reached after three and a half years. However, while working towards this, SBDF has not been able to target the poorest members of communities directly. At this stage, existing clients continue to need support as well, because their businesses are not yet sustainable. An expansion of the portfolio is therefore now a priority if SBDF is to expand its services, carve out the niche that it seeks in the provision of soft agricultural loans, and reach poorer clients. There needs to be more understanding too of whether women's aspirations for change are being supported sufficiently. In the case of kiwi farming, this is traditionally a male preserve, and the 43 kiwi farmers supported by SBDF are all men. Within the kiwi-farming initiative alone, more loans are needed if production is to expand enough to benefit from economies of scale, for instance by enabling producers to co-operate in organising transport to markets, and for producers to gain access to wider markets and strengthen their position in negotiations.

Prospects for SBDF's development are now stronger as a result of amendments to the legislation regarding micro-finance institutions. After determined lobbying by Oxfam and others, Parliament has clearly identified micro-finance institutions as non-banking institutions working for poverty alleviation, and has eased taxation procedures for them.

The loan fund for kiwi farming has amounted to £33,000 since 2002.

An assessment of our micro-finance programme in Mauritania shows the importance of good business advice and support in market analysis for small-scale producers, alongside microfinance services. About 6,000 women have received small loans through Oxfam's micro-finance partners in the programme, and many women speak enthusiastically about earning some income for the first time, and being able to decide how to use this money. However, in Kaedi, which is known as the 'capital' for dyeing cloth, making micro-credit available led to an enormous increase in dyeing, and this saturated the market. Women are therefore having to consider other ways of earning money; one option that some of them are exploring is buying and selling the cloth and chemicals needed for the dyeing trade. The assessment of this programme also finds that low levels of credit are constraining the development of women's enterprises, and that the micro-finance organisations will need to promote a large growth in local savings if their services are to become sustainable without external financial support.

In the UK, campaigning has brought the issues of debt and the exorbitant interest rates charged by doorstep lenders to the attention of civil servants and politicians.

Debt on your Doorstep in the UK

After concerted campaigning by Debt on your Doorstep (DOOD), the government allocated an additional £120m to pilot new models for delivering financial services to people in poverty, and providing low-cost credit, and advice on debt and money management. Oxfam has supported DOOD, a network of 150 national and local organisations, in the development of its work over five years. People who had experienced debt were involved in drawing up the campaign, and spoke directly to politicians and senior civil servants. The differences in women's and men's experiences of debt were highlighted.

The campaign stimulated wide-ranging media coverage and successfully drew the attention of civil servants and politicians to the issue of debt, and extortionate interest rates outside mainstream financial services. Identifying the significance of debt in child poverty, a priority area of government concern, heightened the attention paid to the issues being raised.

One of the main objectives of the campaign — the imposition of a ceiling on interest rates for loans — was not achieved. The government felt that, with insufficient alternatives to high-interest doorstep lenders at this time, desperate people might be pushed toward the illegal, unregulated credit market if a ceiling was set. So DOOD's campaign provides an interesting example of where, although a main objective was not achieved, the policy debate that was stimulated achieved a huge amount, and money was allocated for service developments. The environment in which the campaign can continue is now much more positive.

Oxfam has contributed about £36,000 to this work over five years.

Campaigning on labour rights, and trade policies and rules

Labour rights

Oxfam started campaigning with others on labour rights early in 2004. The campaign report *Trading Away Our Rights* was published in February 2004, focusing on the precarious nature of women's work in international supply chains. The campaign was launched internationally, and in 23 countries around the world.

National campaigns continue in 15 countries. In nine of these, there has been a strengthening of labour regulations. In five countries there have been shifts in employers' compliance with labour laws, and/or in companies' purchasing practices that aggravate precarious jobs. There is an increasing appreciation of the hidden costs for women and society that insecure jobs create.

In **Chile**, ANAMURI (the National Association of Rural and Indigenous Women), whose 6,000 members are mainly seasonal fruit workers, managed to get a law passed requiring the compilation of a national register of recruitment contractors. And the Wine Corporation in Chile has asked Oxfam for a training programme on labour rights and health in the workplace for its workers.

In **Colombia**, campaigning by the labour alliance and other coalitions influenced the government to abandon a proposal to increase the pension age for women.

In **Indonesia**, research on the impact of the 'temporary contracts' law has changed official rhetoric on the benefits of the policy for workers.

In **Peru**, one of Oxfam's partners has been invited by the Association of Asparagus Producers to observe labour practices. This represents a significant shift in the relationship between civil-society organisations and companies, from a confrontational stance to one of dialogue.

In **Bangladesh**, the alliance has campaigned on compensation rights for workers who lose their jobs following the phase-out of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement.²³ Both the government and the employers' association have allocated resources to support affected workers. The UNDP has committed itself to giving Oxfam observer status on its 'technical review committee'.

In the **UK**, lobbying by the National Group of Homeworkers (NGH), Oxfam, and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) helped to close a loophole in UK government legislation which allowed homeworkers to be paid 80 per cent of the minimum wage. However, a joint campaign on homeworkers' rights, targeting high-street retailers, did not go ahead as planned when Oxfam withdrew. At a late stage in the preparation of the campaign, Oxfam decided that the evidence collected was not detailed enough to support a public campaign. We have continued to lobby retailers, while NGH has gone ahead with campaigning. The cancellation of the joint campaign was a painful experience for everyone involved, and we undertook a review to learn lessons from the experience. An important factor contributing to our late withdrawal was that key individuals within Oxfam were not available or were not brought into discussions at a sufficiently early stage. The complexity of Oxfam's organisation, decision-making processes, and communications also frustrated NGH, and we put this small organisation under heavy pressure to produce the evidence needed.

The second strand of our campaigning on labour rights sought an industry-wide solution to the abuse and exploitation of workers in global sportswear-supply chains. *Play Fair at the Olympics* was launched in March 2004 by Oxfam, together with the International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICFTU), and the Clean Clothes Campaign. It targeted seven sportswear companies and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) during the run-up to the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. At least 20 national alliances joined in the campaign.

Five out of the seven companies that were targeted have reviewed their codes of practice and labour policies. Four companies have made some commitments to developing their labour policy, and, most significantly, have begun to address the issue of freedom of association. In some countries where the companies operate, for instance in **Indonesia** and **Cambodia**, relations have been stimulated between the companies and local trade unions, or agreements to collaborate on training programmes have been made.

UK government policy

There have been significant shifts in UK government policy on trade over the last twelve months, beginning with the DTI White Paper on trade in June 2004, followed in March 2005 by the government's new policy on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the ACP²⁴ countries, and by its endorsement of the policy proposals of the Commission for Africa. The Labour Party's manifesto for the General Election also contained new language on trade. The widespread popular campaigning, media work, and lobby work promoted by Oxfam and others in the Trade Justice Movement has contributed to the following changes in stated policy:

- greater recognition that trade will reduce poverty only if part of a broader development strategy, and that import liberalisation can be damaging for developing countries;
- less insistence that poor countries must open up their markets in return for access to Northern markets;
- support for the ending of agricultural export subsidies by 2010;
- support for ending the World Bank / IMF policy of attaching trade-liberalisation conditions to loans;
- in EPAs, a call for the unconditional elimination of remaining EU trade barriers; for ACP governments to decide the pace and coverage of import liberalisation; and for the 'Singapore

²³ Under the Multi-Fibre Arrangement, industrialised countries set import quotas for textiles and clothing. Under a WTO agreement, all quotas came to an end on 1 January 2005.

²⁴ ACP: African, Caribbean, and Pacific.

issues' of investment, competition, and government procurement to be dropped from negotiations, unless requested by ACP governments.

The UK's commitment to open its economy further to developing-country exporters has remained firm, which means that Oxfam has been able to work together with the government to improve access to European markets for countries affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami, and for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

While there are still important differences of opinion between Oxfam and the UK government over how much liberalisation is desirable in developing countries, the key question now is how much political energy the UK will invest in efforts to influence EU trade policy. There are fears that although the government has adopted new language, there has been no real change in the UK stance in EU debates, and therefore no comparable movement in EU positions in WTO trade negotiations.

Free Trade Agreements and WTO accession

Strong alliances have been crucial in maintaining the call for pro-poor development during negotiations of US regional trade agreements, such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and the Dominican Republic–Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR–CAFTA). Civil-society pressure has helped Southern governments to be more assertive in negotiations. Negotiations on the FTAA have now halted, and – whatever happens next – it is clear that the original terms envisaged by the US government and free-trade fundamentalists in the region will not be achieved. A fall-back strategy to put in place US–Andean country FTAs has also run into difficulties, and the timetable is severely delayed.

Oxfam has contributed to civil society's campaigning in a variety of ways. We have undertaken research and disseminated information on vital issues to a wide range of actors and the general public. We have supported key alliances such as the Hemispheric Social Alliance and REMTE (the regional network of women working on economic issues in South America). We took part in a US Congressional briefing to discuss the impact of the DR–CAFTA and produced evidence to show that subsidised US rice exports to Central America would threaten the livelihoods of thousands of rice farmers. One of our partners in Colombia was selected to co-ordinate the FTAA/FTA campaign in the country, and mobilized over one million people in October 2004.

Oxfam's report 'Extortion at the Gate', and associated lobbying by partners and staff, is considered to have contributed to improvements in the deal being negotiated for Viet Nam's accession to the WTO. Several other Southern governments have asked Oxfam for technical assistance relating to their WTO accession.

Campaigning on agricultural dumping

We have continued to press for an end to the dumping of subsidised agricultural surpluses by rich countries on the markets of developing countries. Campaigning by us and others has helped to raise the issue of subsidies on the political agenda of the EU, USA, and WTO. Progress was made at the meeting of WTO members in July 2004, when the EU made a promise to eliminate export subsidies.

In our campaigning on EU sugar subsidies, we focused on the annual general meetings of British Sugar and Tate & Lyle, to counter the lobbying by these companies and to raise awareness with the public. Supporters attended the annual general meetings; we invited the media to stunts outside the meetings; and we followed up with lobbying. This, and other campaigning by Oxfam and allies on EU sugar reform, has helped to weaken the position of the sugar-industry lobby in Europe. The European Commission has proposed reforms, but these do not scale back EU production as much as Oxfam recommends. However, the UK government has played a leading role in ensuring that the EU is now considering aid to the ACP countries that will lose as a result of the reform. Campaigning to achieve a pro-development outcome is not finished.

Important victories for developing countries, which will substantially influence the process of reforming farm subsidies in the USA and EU, have included the WTO's rulings that some US cotton subsidies and EU sugar subsidies are illegal. After the rulings, developing countries involved in

making the complaints expressed gratitude for Oxfam's public support and advocacy. We cannot judge to what degree the sustained campaigning on cotton and sugar subsidies by Oxfam and others influenced the formal deliberations within the WTO panel that considered the complaints. However, we can be sure that campaigning does help to create an atmosphere that supports developing countries to take forward complaints, and puts pressure on offending countries to comply with rulings.

A global movement for change

As one of many organisations campaigning for fair global trade rules and policies, what is it that Oxfam can contribute? Our strengths are derived from the breadth of the Oxfam International alliance and its on-going relationships with partner organisations and people living in poverty in more than 100 countries across the world; working in and building broad-based South–North alliances; raising issues in the media; creating a 'Big Noise'; conducting strong policy research. Within these different areas, we have worked on a number of developments and innovations to extend our influence. For example:

Stronger Southern-based campaigning. In our campaigning on labour rights, for example, broad-based national alliances have been formed, sometimes bringing together different constituencies to campaign on the same issue for the first time. For example, the campaign in Colombia has brought together trade unions and organisations dedicated to development, human rights, and women's issues.

Popularising messages about unfair trade in order to reach new audiences, including young people. As part of our campaigning against agricultural subsidies, 16 UK and global celebrities agreed to have agricultural produce 'dumped' on them for a series of photographs. The eye-catching pictures helped to secure extensive media reach. A Make Trade Fair concert in London, headlined by REM, was a sell-out.

Promoting the 'Big Noise' petition in the South, linked to issues of major concern nationally. More than seven million people have now signed the 'Big Noise' petition — about 80 per cent of them from the South. As we have seen in this chapter, signing the petition might be linked to agricultural trade in Albania, coffee in Ethiopia, or women's labour rights in a number of countries. Large numbers of women and men in the South making their views known can add to the weight of arguments made by Southern governments, and help to hold governments to account to their citizens. When the promotion of the 'Big Noise' petition is part of on-going programme work, it can also help partners and people living in poverty to develop new skills and confidence to take part in campaigning, and acquire a broader understanding of global trading issues.

Lessons, issues, and risks

An integrated approach to respond to chronic vulnerability and poverty

We still have a long way to go in developing new patterns of work and relationships, drawing on existing livelihoods and humanitarian strategies, to provide more effective responses to chronic poverty and vulnerability in many countries where we work. This will often include scaling up our response to HIV/AIDS in these countries. There are examples of good practice and interesting initiatives in some programmes on which to build, but we are conscious of the urgent need to adapt our approaches more widely and fundamentally. Integrating strong advocacy and campaigning at many levels into our approach is essential. The level of humanitarian assistance that some vulnerable communities continue to require year on year makes clear the huge need for investment in vulnerable regions and pro-poor development policies.

Equality and rights-based approaches

This year our assessments show clearer evidence that staff and partners are seeing the benefits of taking an explicit, rights-based approach in programming. In Malawi, for instance, the programme has supported both communities and government agencies to develop a stronger awareness of rights and duties, and to work towards increasing accountability in local government. In Malawi, Albania, and Viet Nam, we see how producer groups and community organisations are taking positive action to

ensure that development projects and enterprise developments benefit all, including the most vulnerable groups, and we are seeing how programmes can facilitate this.

We see stronger gender analysis too in many of the assessments conducted this year. For example, programmes in Albania, Ghana, and Mauritania are helping women to benefit economically, gain more control of money, take on new positions of responsibility outside the home, and gain new status in their communities.

Access to assets, business services, and markets

Support to poor people to help them to acquire the necessary assets for engagement in trade must be a fundamental component of programmes. In particular, the lack of access to appropriate financial services is a widespread problem, often excluding very poor people and preventing poor producers from developing their businesses to a size where they can ensure a fair return in the market. We have not focused on learning about the development of financial-services programmes. We need to increase our knowledge about the most appropriate models being developed, and extend our advocacy for appropriate provisions. We also need to learn more about how best to help poor producers to access the range of business services that they require alongside micro-finance services.

Across our programme, our staff and partners have different levels of understanding of markets. Confidence is growing in our ability to undertake a market analysis, but we are still trying to understand how to address market-based issues in different social and political environments. We are also still in the process of finding the most appropriate new partners to support poor producers in business development, and strategies to ensure that business services can be accessed by poor producers in a sustainable way.

Working with companies

Alongside our campaigning on labour rights and corporate social responsibility, we are significantly expanding our engagement with international companies, with a variety of objectives. We seek to facilitate economic links between companies and poor producers, provide access to business services for producer groups and civil-society organisations, change industry practices, and develop the international market for fairly and ethically traded goods. These engagements began only recently, and we have much to learn about what contributes to effective collaboration and what hinders it.

The development of Southern campaigning

We see a huge development in campaigning led from Oxfam Regions, and engagement with global campaign actions. *'Trading Away Our Rights'* has been a big step forward in integrated global campaigning, and the *'Big Noise'* petition has been well integrated into some on-going country programmes. But there are challenges in keeping up momentum and continuing to invest sufficiently to support partners to sustain campaigns in some places. It is hard for very vulnerable producers and workers to campaign at all in some situations, and for their organisations to feel confident to campaign openly without the presence of international agencies. We need to give more thought to issues of leadership and support.

Global campaigns require clear, powerful messages, but – as was evident when we started campaigning on cotton – the nature of the issues varies in different country contexts. As we plan and carry through our campaigning, we need strong, and linked, analysis at different levels to maximise our effectiveness. Some countries, for instance in the Horn, East and Central Africa Region, still find it hard to engage with global priorities for trade. And in several key developing countries such as Nigeria, India, and South Africa there has not been strong engagement in campaigning on trade.

Alliances and campaigning partners

The constituency now campaigning on trade has been expanded through the *Make Poverty History (MPH)* and *Global Call to Action against Poverty (G-CAP)* coalitions. It is essential for these coalitions to maintain the visibility of trade issues among other topics competing for discussion at the July 2005 G8 and September UN MDG summits, and then stay focused on trade up to the December WTO meeting in Hong Kong.

We have invested heavily in supporting and building campaigning alliances in developing countries, and internationally, in recent years. These coalitions bring enormous reach to campaigning efforts, but also pose challenges for Oxfam and others. Inevitably, civil-society actors differ, sometimes fundamentally, in their analysis of the best ways to achieve change, and therefore they have differing views on campaign messages and strategy. We have, for instance, funded Focus on the Global South since 1997, and differences in their analysis and that of Oxfam on global trade have been debated publicly. We assessed this partnership as part of our impact-assessment process this year, sharing views about where each organisation was contributing best to achieving change for poor people, and where our major differences lay. In this partnership, and in other partnerships and alliances, it is important that we keep challenging one another about the potential, and actual, impact of our strategies on poor people. It is important to understand where different analyses and strategies are complementary, and where they are weakening the effectiveness and efficiency of coalitions.

Prioritisation

The volume and complexity of work on *Make Trade Fair* is hard to manage and link at all levels of campaigning, given the demands and opportunities stimulated by campaigning to date, and with added demands arising as a result of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean and the launch of *MPH* and *G-CAP*. We have not been able to prioritise international work on coffee and patents in the last year, and we need to increase our focus on these issues. We have transferred some resources to campaigning on trade outside the UK, reducing what we can contribute within the UK, and we have to keep asking ourselves where we can best employ our resources to achieve the greatest impact. We need to take care not to stretch ourselves too far, collectively and individually.

4 The right to basic social services

The changes that we want to see in the world

Our aim is to ensure people's right to access to basic social services, such as education, water, and health (including support services to communities affected by HIV/AIDS). Within this, we focus primarily on ensuring good-quality basic education for girls, and on addressing HIV/AIDS.

Progress towards our objectives

Highlights

- *Responding to HIV.* Pursuing a complaint about a teacher's sexual abuse of a schoolgirl in Zambezia, northern Mozambique, led to the Ministry of Education passing a law which creates a clear process for dealing with cases of abuse in schools.
- *Improving the quality of education.* Active, child-centred teaching methods, introduced in Duyen Hai district, Viet Nam, are now being adopted more widely by the government in Tra Vinh province, and through the national curriculum.
- *Campaigning for adequate financing for basic services.* The UK government made a commitment in 2004 to increase its overseas aid to 0.7 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product by 2013, and is now contributing to the Fast Track Initiative for financing education. The *Make Poverty History* and *Global Call to Action Against Poverty* alliances are extending the reach of campaigning, leading up to the G8 summit and UN Millennium Plus Five summit, both scheduled to take place in 2005.

Responding to HIV/AIDS

In the regions most affected by HIV/AIDS, Oxfam's assumptions and aspirations concerning its development and humanitarian work are being challenged. As reported by our Southern Africa Region, our own energy levels, creativity, and tenacity are also being challenged. Oxfam's staff and partner agencies, as well as communities, have to face the reality of increasing chronic poverty and food insecurity in many areas. According to the World Health Organisation, life expectancy in Zimbabwe has fallen from 63 years to 37 years in one decade. Women are at far greater risk than men of becoming infected with HIV, and they also carry the burden of care for others. In Zambia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, more than 75 per cent of HIV-positive young people aged between 15 and 24 are female.

In the previous chapter of this report, on the right to a sustainable livelihood, we reported on how programmes seek to take account of the impact of HIV on communities. We illustrated the efforts of our livelihood programme in the Shire Highlands of Malawi to ensure that households affected by HIV benefit from the programme. Communities are identifying the most vulnerable households to take part in livelihoods initiatives, designed to suit their situation, and to receive food or other assistance at times of stress. Communities have been supported to run schemes that help households affected by HIV to care for members who are ill. Oxfam is working in partnership with Médecins sans Frontières, so that people at risk can be referred for HIV testing and treatment.

Through this combination of strategies, many people have been able to continue with some of their livelihood, household, or caring activities. People have benefited from activities to earn some income, for instance by owning chickens or goats for the first time. Children have been able to return to school. But, perhaps more importantly, the programme activities have enabled people to be more open, and have facilitated changes in the way communities respond to the risks and consequences of HIV/AIDS.

For example, one of Oxfam's local partners, Mrs Teleza Yolore, executive director of Bvumbwe Community Based Organisation, commented on the benefits that had come from offering food to vulnerable households during the lean period of the year: *'For your information, our CBO has observed, because of food support, many people living with HIV/AIDS have been able to come out openly, and most of them have been linked to the ARV programme supported by MSF.'*

We also find that more households affected by HIV are now ready to take part in livelihood activities, in response to encouragement from the community. Many were initially reluctant, because they feared not being able to pay back loans, for instance.

The volunteers who provide home-based care are seen to be an important catalyst for change within their communities. As their work in the community has been recognised, they have become trusted links and mediators between community members, village leaders, and service providers. Their efforts have stimulated others to want to contribute, leading to greater collaboration between traditional leaders and community members in seeking to address the needs of orphans and, more generally, to the needs of people affected by HIV.

Oxfam, like others working to raise awareness about HIV, is also beginning to see changes in some cultural practices which can lead to HIV infection. For instance, there is a tradition in Malawi that, when a woman is widowed, she must be 'cleansed' from her husband's death by having sexual intercourse with a male member of her husband's family, preferably one of his brothers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this practice is being modified, and that herbs are sometimes now used for cleansing.

But it is not only livelihood programmes that are being adapted to take account of the consequences of HIV. Oxfam's education programme in Zambezia, northern Mozambique, for instance, is helping school communities to understand and respond to the risks of HIV.

Empowering school communities in Zambezia, northern Mozambique

Nearly 7,000 children now attend the nine schools built so far as part of Oxfam's education programme in Zambezia, northern Mozambique. Forty-six per cent of the pupils are girls, compared with 43 per cent in the province as a whole. The programme has put a strong emphasis on developing the school councils, made up of students, parents, and teachers. Functional literacy classes have been offered to interested council members, particularly women, and nearly 70 per cent of those completing the classes have shown interest in continuing to learn through normal evening classes.

The programme has also promoted the appointment of women teachers. They are providing role models for girls and local women, and this has helped to increase the participation of women in the school councils. In the programme's schools, more than 30 per cent of school-council members are women, compared with the national average of 15–20 per cent.

HIV/AIDS is a factor in everyday life in the region, so the programme decided that awareness of the facts about the pandemic needed to be raised among teachers, students, and the community. First, in collaboration with school authorities, HIV has been included in the local curricula. Second, working with Aro Juvenil, a youth advocacy organisation, the programme introduced discussion of HIV prevention, infection, and mitigation, as well as the social and economic impacts of HIV/AIDS. Third, the Mozambican Women's Education Association (AMME) has been working with Oxfam to end the sexual abuse of girls in schools.

This encouraged a girl in Lioma village to come forward and identify a teacher who had made her pregnant. It was later found that he had abused several girls. AMME supported community members to take the case to a local tribunal. Since the Ministry of Education had no formal procedures for dealing with such cases, the District Education Department initially did nothing. AMME then took the case higher, and the

teacher was dismissed. As a result of this lobbying, the Ministry of Education passed a new law which creates a clear process for dealing with cases of abuse in schools.

Other girls then started coming forward to report incidences of abuse. The community members in Lioma felt so strongly about the issue that they decided to set up a Committee Against the Abuse of Girls. With support from AMME and Oxfam, they also set up a counselling centre in the village. Over a six-month period, 18 cases of abuse of girls and young women have been reported to the committee, including abuse by teachers and fellow students. This new unwillingness to suffer abuse in silence means that women and girls are a little more empowered to defend themselves against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

£2 million has been invested in this programme since January 2002. While the impact of the programme is evident, a key challenge is to continue to develop the capacity of local partners, including government agencies, to ensure that the changes achieved by the programme are sustained.

Through our Pan-Africa programme, we have worked with others to seek commitments from the Africa Union on access to medicines, particularly for HIV/AIDS. At the request of the Africa Union, Oxfam has provided the Union with technical advice on its HIV/AIDS strategy.

Promoting access to affordable medicines

We have continued to pursue issues concerning patents on medicines. For instance, we attended the 2004 International AIDS conference in Bangkok, where we launched a briefing note entitled 'Free Trade Agreement between the USA and Thailand Threatens Access to HIV/AIDS Treatment'. We held a press conference with local and international media. The main message was that medicine and treatment should not be included in the upcoming Free Trade Agreement (FTA). We have been supporting Thai NGOs to link together and continue to campaign on the issue.

We have made an analysis of 'TRIPs-plus'²⁵ across the other US FTAs as well, and this has been appreciated by developing countries in their negotiations. We have continued to advocate that pharmaceutical companies should reduce their prices for all essential medicines, especially Anti-Retro Virals, and to stop lobbying for governments to include TRIPs-plus in FTAs.

Oxfam also continues to play an active role in the operation of the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, TB, and Malaria. The role of NGOs, including Oxfam, in the development of the Global Fund, and the part they continue to play, is an interesting story.

Civil society and the Global Fund

NGOs, including Oxfam, have been a part of the history of the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, TB, and Malaria from the beginning. Intensive lobbying put huge pressure on donors and the UN to accept the need to form an international mechanism to fund a response to the health crisis, especially relating to HIV, and especially in Africa. As a result of this pressure, civil society was invited to take part in designing the structure and function of the Global Fund, and it continues to play a major role in the Fund's operation.

Voting members of the board of the Global Fund are in two blocks, donors and recipients, with an equal number of places. The donor block includes Northern governments, the private sector, and private foundations. Southern and Northern NGOs each have a place in the 'recipient' block, alongside Southern governments.

²⁵ TRIPs: The WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. 'TRIPs-plus' refers to stricter intellectual property rules, for example turning drug-registration authorities into patent-enforcing bodies, and limiting the use of compulsory licensing (which allows governments to override intellectual property rules in the interests of public health).

Communities living with the diseases also have a voting place now in the recipient block, as a result of civil-society lobbying. There has to be a majority in each block, supporting any matter put to the vote, if it is to be passed. Until recently, the position of vice-chair was held by one of the NGOs representatives, endorsing the contribution that civil society is making to the Fund's operation.

Country proposals for funding from the Global Fund pass through a Country Co-ordinating Mechanism. NGOs and communities living with the diseases are represented within these bodies too.

In less than four years, the Fund has raised US\$6 billion for health. But it is facing huge challenges in its efforts to ensure that the money reaches poor people. The major problem is lack of capacity in health services in developing countries. Some money that has been allocated remains in the Global Fund bank, or in banks in the capital cities of recipient countries.

Oxfam has made a contribution at every stage of this story. For instance, in 2000, we presented a paper on the creation of a global health fund during the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS). In 2002, Oxfam presented a paper at the global AIDS conference in Barcelona, identifying the resources needed, and the pre-requisites, for the Fund to fulfill its mission. For the past two years, Oxfam has represented Northern NGOs in the Portfolio Management and Procurement Committee, which focuses on policies in relation to medicines, the health system, and grants. In this capacity, Oxfam is a member of the delegation of Northern NGOs, and has on occasions spoken as their Board member on medicines policy. Oxfam has played a lead role in lobbying against in-kind donations of drugs and other goods and services to the Fund, arguing that they undermine the development of local capacity, have no built-in sustainability, distort local markets, and prevent competition from generic drugs. A proposal from the USA and private sector to allow in-kind donations was rejected by the Board. In collaboration with developing-country governments, Oxfam also succeeded in getting the guideline for funding proposals broadened and agreed by the Board, enabling bids to support the development of health systems to be eligible in the fifth Round of disbursements.

Innovating to extend access to education, and improve the quality of education

This year, several of our education programmes have reached an important point. In Viet Nam, Oxfam has collaborated with the government for almost ten years to develop educational provision in Duyen Hai district, Tra Vinh province. It is now time to consider closure of the project in the district, and look forward to the next stage of our education programme in the country. In Niger, 30 community schools which Oxfam had worked with partners to establish during the past three years were handed over to the government. In Cambodia, Oxfam GB made the decision in 2002 to phase out programming on education. The funding relationship with one partner ended in 2003, and funding of two other partners ends this year.

We shall survey the achievements and the lessons that have emerged from our programmes in these three countries.

📁 Quality in the classroom in Duyen Hai district, Viet Nam

Duyen Hai is one of the poorest districts, in one of the poorest provinces, in the Mekong Delta area of south Viet Nam. The minority Khmer people constitute about 17 per cent of the population in Duyen Hai.

When Oxfam started working with the government in Duyen Hai in 1996, the priority was to increase, and improve, educational facilities. Over the years, Oxfam has supported the building of 69 classrooms, 11 teachers' houses, 18 separate toilets for girls and boys, three offices, and three bridges to improve children's access to school. Now the government is allocating more funds to build schools in remote areas, so by

2004–05 Oxfam had decided to continue supporting only water and sanitation schemes. Last year, these provided facilities to more than 2,000 children and teachers.

As time went on, the programme became focused on helping teachers to move from traditional, didactic teaching methods to a child-centred teaching methodology (CCM) which actively engages children. VSO²⁶ teacher trainers introduced child-centred methods to teachers, chosen to be 'resource teachers'. They in turn trained 'model teachers', who pass on the methods to colleagues in their schools. So far 320 'model teachers' in the 21 primary schools across the district have been trained. One hundred and twelve (35 per cent) of the 'model teachers' are women, a considerable achievement in this remote district, where there are far more men than women teachers. Fourteen (44 per cent) of the 32 'resource teachers' are also women, and over time they have become more confident to conduct workshops and speak in front of male-dominated audiences.

In-service training continues, and teachers observe one another's classes and give each other feedback. An external consultant commented on the constructive and healthy comments that she observed being given by peers.

Teachers and children are finding the new approach in the classroom enjoyable, and the children can be seen to benefit in a number of ways. In 2004, 15.2 per cent of students (49 per cent of them girls) were rated as 'excellent', compared with 5.8 per cent (47 per cent of them girls) three years ago. Girls have become more confident and are not shy when taking part in games with boys, or taking on responsibilities at school. Cam Tien, a schoolgirl in Grade 2, says: *'It is so nice to be a group leader and be able to give instructions to my friends. I like going out in front of the class to present things too. The teacher does not say "you are very bad", but often says "you are very good".'* The friendlier relationship that has developed between teachers and students has contributed to the continued rise in attendance rates and fall in drop-out rates, that can be seen. Trieu, a Grade 5 teacher, says: *'Before, children were afraid of being my pupils, as I often hit them with my ruler ... (Now) I try my best to make my lessons child-friendly, and I am happy to observe that my students are more excited in class, and we have a lot of good times in our lessons. Now they like learning in my class very much.'*

Until recently, the VSO teacher trainers assumed responsibility for the design and overall facilitation of the training workshops. But the resource teachers' confidence has grown as their colleagues have given them positive feedback, and especially when the provincial Ministry of Education and Training recognised their competence and asked them to start the introduction of child-centred methods across the province. They are now working independently, designing and running provincial workshops, and VSO teacher trainers are no longer involved.

At national level, the success of the work in Duyen Hai is also recognised. The Ministry of Education and Training has reformed the teaching curriculum and textbooks to promote a child-centred approach, and has welcomed Oxfam's manual on the techniques involved.

Parents' involvement in the schools has contributed to the success of the work in Duyen Hai district. At one school, for instance, parents have contributed money to improve the schoolyard, and to give prizes for poor and delicate students, and for excellent teachers. They run football matches, they organised extra-curricula activities on Viet Nam's Teachers' Day, and they ran a quiz on World AIDS Day.

The budget for the programme in 2004–05 was £41,000. There are now 11,900 primary-school children across Duyen Hai District benefiting from the developments that have taken place, 5,980 of them girls, and 3,672 of them Khmer. Children from other districts in Tra Vinh province are also beginning to benefit, as CCM starts to be introduced more widely.

²⁶ Voluntary Service Overseas.

The government is clearly committed to continue the work in Duyen Hai district, and extend the use of CCM in Tra Vinh province and nationally. But 95 per cent of the national education budget is spent on teachers' salaries, and the government is still looking to Oxfam for financial and technical support. Oxfam plans to withdraw from Duyen Hai, but is considering what follow-up monitoring and refresher courses might still be provided to ensure that the investment to date is optimised. We are also considering the possibilities for further work with the provincial Ministry of Education and Training in Tra Vinh.

In West Africa, Oxfam established its education programme at the end of 2000, working with partners in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Liberia. The programme is seeking to experiment on a small scale to develop innovative and sustainable models of gender-equitable, good-quality, basic education provision, which, if found to be effective, could be used on a wider scale by others, including governments. The programme has focused on marginalised and vulnerable communities, including pastoralists and those affected by conflict. It has also supported national networks to campaign for increased spending on education and improved services.

Various strategies have helped to give girls the opportunity to go to school and grow in confidence. In Ghana, the work of Oxfam's partners ProNet and Radio Progress influenced chiefs and their elders, in most communities where the programme works, to pass by-laws to stop child 'elopement'. Since the by-laws were passed over a year ago, no schoolgirl has been given out in marriage. A radio broadcast called *The School Microphone* in Burkina Faso is increasing girls' confidence by giving them an opportunity to talk in public. Building separate latrines for girls and boys in Mali and Niger is encouraging girls to stay at school longer. And the involvement of *animatrices* in the Mali and Niger programmes is helping to change the attitudes of parents towards girls' early marriage and education. The case study below describes some of the achievements and challenges facing the programme in Niger, where Oxfam works with ADD (Action pour un Developpement Durable), Timidria, VIE Kande ni bayra, and the national education coalition ROSEN.

Education for the first time for pastoralist children in Tillaberi, Niger

Education and health-care provision in Tillaberi region of Niger is limited, and almost completely non-existent in pastoralist zones. The pastoralist communities are especially marginalised in political terms, and more than 80 per cent remain illiterate. The Djerma, Fulani (Peulh) and Tuareg communities were left economically devastated after the Tuareg rebellion in the early 1990s, and successive droughts and desertification are making their livelihoods more insecure.

Oxfam's²⁷ programme has supported the establishment and development of 30 community schools, enabling more than 1,800 children from pastoralist communities to attend school for the first time.

Of the 1,072 children enrolled in the community schools in 2001–02, 471 (44 per cent) of them were girls. Of the 1,823 children enrolled in 2003–04, 902 (49 per cent) were girls. The proportion of girls attending from the beginning has been made possible through the work of *animatrices*. In an area where women teachers are extremely rare, and where girls may be married as young as 10 or 11, the *animatrices* have represented an important role model for girls and their mothers. They have begun to change parents' attitudes about education for their daughters. They have closely monitored girls' attendance, followed up girls who are ill, and created greater awareness in communities about hygiene and sanitation issues.

Parents have participated in the management of the schools through Parents' Associations, and have contributed some money towards the running of the schools in the form of loan reimbursements.

²⁷ Oxfam GB established the programme in Niger in 2002. As we do not have staff based in Niger, the Dutch international NGO SNV supported relationships with partners and financial management in the first year, and since July 2003 this management support has been provided by Oxfam Québec.

After lengthy negotiation with the Ministry of Education, the schools were handed over to the government in October 2004. This acceptance of responsibility by the State for schools, where none existed in the past, is welcome. But five months on, there are problems. Teachers' salaries are not being paid regularly, schools are short of supplies, many parents' associations have stopped meeting, and loan reimbursements to community education funds have ceased.

There are important lessons from this experience. In an area where communities feel marginalised from State services, we should have done more to build a sense of ownership and responsibility for educational services at community level before handing over responsibility for the schools. Another weakness was in communication between the programme and district and central government over the handover. Especially in the context of a very new government-decentralisation process, a clearer understanding was needed about the future resourcing of the schools. Having appreciated the problems, Oxfam decided that support for these school communities must continue, and that in future partners should support communities for a two-year phase-out period after handover to government.

We know that only a start has been made towards creating a situation in which girls have the same educational opportunities as boys, and changing attitudes to women's roles in society. Evidence from one community indicates that the women are very aware of the potential of education to provide their daughters (and themselves through literacy and numeracy classes) with skills to organise and run new income-generating activities. Their appreciation of the transformative role of education seems to be limited to the economic realm at present. But, through developing women's and girls' capacities to be independent and organised, as well as developing their voices within the formerly male-dominated Parents' Associations, a process of empowerment has begun. To develop the transformative potential of the education programme, however, requires a long-term effort.

The cost of this programme since it began in 2002 is £470,000.

Our West Africa programme illustrates one of the fundamental areas of our education work, notably the shifting of ideas and beliefs. The *animatrice* model in West Africa, and close co-operation with parents' associations and school management committees in all our programmes in Africa, are helping to tackle entrenched ideas about the value of girls and their need for education.

In Cambodia, Oxfam's work with partners RDA, KAPE, and PNKA has been focusing on supporting children who are most at risk of dropping out of school or repeating grades. Research²⁸ indicates that the economic and social returns from education for girls are achieved only after they complete lower secondary education. Part of the programme in Cambodia has sought to support girls to stay on beyond primary school. Children with disabilities have also been supported through the programme.

Our involvement in education programming in Cambodia is ending, because there are many NGOs and donors involved in the education sector, and Oxfam can add more value by using its resources in other areas. As we have worked with partners towards ending our funding relationship, we have remained active in the NGO Education Partnership (NEP), a partnership of 60 organisations. The government increasingly values NEP's contributions to developing Cambodia's education strategies and plans. Oxfam has also supported the development of the national coalition involved in the Global Campaign for Education. From a position in which only a few Oxfam partners were involved in 2001–02, in April 2005 18 such organisations participated in the Global Week of Action. We shall continue to support the coalition.

²⁸ G. Herz and B. Sperling: 'What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence and Policies from the Developing World', Council on Foreign Relations, 2004.

Learning about school drop-out in Cambodia

Two thousand and thirty eight children — 50 per cent of them girls — received scholarships through the programme in 2003–04. The children most likely to drop out were targeted in each school. In some schools, boys were found to be more likely to drop out to take advantage of local job opportunities, for instance in the construction industry. In other schools, opportunities in the garment industry meant that more girls might drop out to start work. More generally, parents will prioritise sending their sons to school before their daughters, and if the school is some distance from home, parents may worry about their daughters' safety and not send them.

A variety of initiatives have been introduced to support girls, in particular, to stay in school. Parents have appreciated the provision of dormitories for girls in lower secondary school. Giving girls bicycles as part of the scholarship programme has helped others to continue their education. The introduction of cooking and sewing classes (funded by other donors), and other vocational training considered useful to girls, also encouraged parents to favour keeping their daughters, rather than their sons, in school. Although cooking and sewing classes for girls could be thought to reinforce gender stereotypes, in a country where only one in 20 girls completes upper secondary school, these activities can begin to increase parents' support for their daughters' education.

Providing wells and kitchen equipment for schools, alongside a breakfast programme supported by WFP, has also helped to increase enrolment rates in some schools.

Both of Cheng Srei's parents died of AIDS three years ago. She is 14 years old, the youngest of five children. A scholarship has helped her to continue at school since her parents died, and she is now in Grade 5.

Seng Kim Leap has ten brothers and sisters. Her mother is widowed. Kim Leap has now passed the examination to move up to Grade 10, having been supported through her lower secondary education with a grant to cover her dormitory place, food, uniform, and learning materials.

Providing a scholarship of about US\$5–\$10 a year can help some poor families to keep a child in school. A dormitory place costs about US\$200. But, in the areas where the scholarships and other forms of support have been provided, the poor economic circumstances of families mean that it is still difficult to keep children from poor families in school. The impact of the programme on drop-out rates has varied from school to school. If families are to take full advantage of such schemes, programmes that support communities to develop more sustainable livelihoods are clearly needed alongside the education initiatives.

Working with financial incentive schemes raises questions about how they are going to be sustained, so it is encouraging that some governments have now introduced programmes. The government of Brazil's substantial School Bursary programme has led the way in these developments. But concerns remain that, while financial incentives may have positive effects in the short term, they do little to bring about lasting change in the lives of poor families unless they are part of broader programmes. In 2004, Oxfam started a programme in Brazil with Missao Crianca, working alongside the School Bursary programme. Women are the recipients of the bursaries in Brazil, and Oxfam's new programme will build on this, supporting them to become active agents for change in their communities and families, and extending the educational opportunities available to them and their families.

We also support advocacy for increased budgets for education, and the tracking of budget expenditure, through coalitions involved in the Global Campaign for Education, and those supported by the Commonwealth Education Fund.

Alliances for change

The Commonwealth Education Fund

A mid-term review of the work of the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF)²⁹ has shown that this initiative is achieving its objectives of promoting strong civil-society coalitions for education, and lobbying government to keep education high on the political and social agenda of developing countries in the Commonwealth. Coalitions in 16 lower-income countries are supported through the Fund. International fundraising from the corporate sector has been disappointing, achieving only about £1m, rather than the hoped-for £10m.

In the future, greater emphasis will be given to developing collaborative partnerships at the national level to work towards Education For All. The Standard Chartered Bank in Ghana has given a donation to the Ghana CEF and is also conducting training for the national coalition on working with the corporate sector and negotiating a common agenda.

The Mid-Term Review provides evidence of the range and scope of policy change at national and sub-national level in many of the 16 CEF countries to which our work has contributed. This includes the introduction of mother-tongue education in *adivasi* areas of Bangladesh, and strengthening the roles of School Management Committees and Parent-Teachers' Associations in Malawi. The CEF has taken a lead in supporting the formation of the Pakistan Coalition for Education through a process of regional and national meetings. There is a need, however, for coalitions supported by CEF in different countries to learn more from one another. The CEF has embarked on developing an exit strategy to ensure that coalition work can be sustained through alternative and national funds.

Bilateral donors are also showing support for sustaining the work of the national CEF coalitions beyond 2007, when central CEF funding is due to end. In Zambia, where Oxfam is the lead CEF agency, donors such as Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI) and the Danish Embassy are recognising the potential influence that a strong national coalition can have on education delivery in the country, and they have pooled funds to support ZANEC, the coalition supported by CEF.

Beyond Access: Gender, Education, and Development

The Beyond Access project has been a joint initiative between Oxfam, the Institute of Education at London University, and DFID. It started at the beginning of 2003 and will end in December 2005. It has brought together policy makers from governments and UN agencies, researchers, NGOs, and teachers, to share knowledge of what works, and what is good practice, in terms of gender-equitable education. It has explored how achieving gender equality in all aspects of education can help to achieve not only the 2005 MDG for gender equality, but also the 2015 MDG that aims at education for all.

The core of the project has been a series of international seminars. In addition, knowledge is shared through the project's newsletter *Equals*, and a book drawing on the project's work will be published in 2005.

The project has developed a new measure for gender equality in education, and for calculating the level of resources that will be needed to achieve gender equality by 2015. This is now being explored further by UNICEF and UNESCO as a multi-dimensional measure, which expresses gender equality in education better than other current measures.

Beyond Access also influenced the Report Card used in 2005 by the Global Campaign for Education to rate donor governments on their commitment to Education for All and the MDGs. This year's Report Card, *Missing the Mark*, includes an indicator rating governments according to how much aid they give to the poorest countries, and to countries with the biggest 'gender gap' in education.

²⁹ The Commonwealth Education Fund was set up by the British government, with initial funding of £10m, aiming to raise further money to ensure that education remains high on the political and social agenda of developing countries in the Commonwealth. The Fund is managed by ActionAid, Save the Children, and Oxfam, both internationally and in the countries where funds are being allocated.

As a result of a mid-term review of the project, it has been decided that, in its final year, the project will focus on making sure that gender equality is a major message at key events, such as the G8 meeting in July and the UN Summit in September 2005. This is especially pertinent, given that 2005 is the year when the gender-parity MDG target is due to be achieved. The target will be missed by more than 75 countries worldwide.

International and UK advocacy and campaigning

At the spring meetings of the World Bank and IMF in 2004, Oxfam organised a major press conference with the World Bank and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), to highlight the fact that donors were failing to allocate enough finance to the Education Fast Track Initiative. Oxfam was instrumental in making sure that the issue got coverage in the world's media. During the year, the UK government reversed its position on the Fast Track Initiative, and is now supporting and contributing to it.

At the annual meetings of the World Bank and IMF, we campaigned for greater debt cancellation, and for the sale of IMF gold to finance debts to the IMF. A stunt was organised outside the World Bank, featuring giant 'gold bars'. The campaigning may have played a part in ensuring that debt cancellation was high on the agenda of the G7 when they met in October 2004. Although a debt-cancellation deal was not reached at that meeting, it was the first time since the enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative was launched in 1999 that the G7 had agreed that more needed to be done to resolve the problem of unsustainable debt. This has laid the groundwork for a deal to be agreed, we hope, in 2005.

Prior to the annual meetings, the UK government had announced that it would cancel its share of up to 100 per cent of the debts owed by many of the poorest countries to the World Bank and other development banks, and would push for the sale of IMF gold to finance debts owed to the IMF. Oxfam's long-term partner, the Jubilee Debt Campaign, played a significant role in campaigning on these issues. Oxfam has been an active member of the Jubilee Debt Campaign for many years, providing finance and campaigns support, and serving on the board of governors.

In June 2004, the UK government also announced its commitment to reaching the international target of devoting 0.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product to overseas aid by 2013. A broad alliance of organisations and individuals had been campaigning for a commitment from the government through the *00.7 Campaign*. The campaign involved e-actions, advertisements, and high-level lobbying.

We have also taken up specific country issues at the World Bank and IMF. For example, we contributed to the writing of a GCE paper, entitled *Undervaluing Teachers: IMF policies squeeze Zambia's education system*. This described the situation in Zambia, where debt relief had been suspended, and the government was unable to employ 9,000 teachers whom it had trained, owing to IMF limitations on public spending. Oxfam sponsored the head of the Zambian Teachers' Union and a Zambian teacher to attend the IMF annual meeting. A meeting was held with the Zambian IMF Mission Chief, and the story was covered at length by the media. The Zambian schoolteacher appeared on National Public Radio in the USA. Following this campaigning, the IMF renegotiated its agreement with Zambia, and (according to unpublished evidence) now allows more flexibility on the question of the budget for teachers' salaries.

In April 2005, the GCE Week of Action involved millions of people from more than 100 countries. The strategy of national groups engaging high-level politicians in the GCE Week of Action was a success. For example, in Niger 25 MPs, including government ministers and deputy ministers, 'returned to school' on 27 April. Each signed up to at least two of the four education developments that the coalition was calling for. These concerned the repeal the mandatory retirement policy for teachers; the recruitment of 1,000 extra teachers per year; an increase in the primary-education budget from 8.6 per cent to 12 per cent in 2006; and the opening of 1000 extra literacy centres per year. The Prime Minister also expressed his support. Oxfam continued to play a supporting role once again in the ideas and plan of action for the Global Week of Action. Oxfam GB provided about £100,000 over the year to the GCE, and Oxfam International provided further support. We have a staff member on the

GCE Board who supports the GCE in global terms, and a UK regional campaigner leads the GCE activity in the UK.

The work done last year to establish broad coalitions to campaign on the MDGs in 2005 has been significant. The UK coalition, *Make Poverty History*, and the global coalition, *Global Call to Action Against Poverty*, are in place. Eighty national coalitions have been set up to take action at key moments in 2005. Mass methods of communications are being used, and millions of white bands have now been sold. Nelson Mandela's presence at the launch of *Make Poverty History* in London, huge support for the event, and wide media coverage gave the campaign a strong start. Oxfam hosted the first meetings of both the UK and international MDG coalitions, and managed the Secretariat for the meeting to establish the Africa section of the *Global Call to Action Against Poverty* (see the chapter on the right to be heard). We have been one of a long list of key players without whom the campaign would not be happening. As the campaign has developed and grown, there is an increasing number of people and organisations in this critical chain.

Lessons, issues, and risks

Oxfam's workplace policy on HIV

Our own staff, and those of our partners, need to be able to deal with the consequences of the HIV pandemic in their own lives. The implementation of our Workplace Policy on HIV is an absolute priority and condition for successful programme development in the midst of the pandemic. It has taken time to put it into practice across the countries where we work in Southern and Eastern Africa, where the policy has been pioneered. As a result of experiences in these countries, some global support to oversee the implementation of the policy in other Oxfam regions is being maintained.

Scaling-up our response to HIV

Given the scale of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, it is difficult to develop programmes of a size and scope to have any significant impact. For several years we pursued an HIV strategy that focused on integrating a response to HIV/AIDS across all our Aims (i.e. adapting our strategies and interventions as necessary to make them effective and relevant to communities affected by HIV/AIDS, or 'mainstreaming'), but we recognised that what we were doing needed to be both scaled up and extended in its scope. We have recognised that we need to think differently about programming — working with others across sectors, understanding systems, and thinking on a much bigger scale than we are accustomed to. Our Southern Africa Region is leading in the development of our thinking and strategies. In future, it will be important to allow and encourage programme staff to 'think big', and important too for people with different skills and experience, from inside Oxfam and outside, to contribute to our new thinking. New programmes have now been designed in all countries in our Southern Africa Region, and we feel that the collaboration between staff from the Region and our Campaigns and Policy Department has improved the quality of the designs. Our experiences have also led us to decide to increase the capacity of the global HIV team, based in our Southern Africa region, in order to improve the speed at which we can pursue our scaling-up, and the quality of this work.

Moving on from the public-sector research project

The public-service research project mentioned in our Impact Report last year has been completed. It has provided useful information and new insights about current debates, including public-service management; the role of international financial institutions; the role of the State versus the private sector; and the involvement of civil society in decision making. The report includes country case studies from Mali, Tanzania, Yemen, and Mozambique.

The research findings are already being used in developing our programme policy, and in advocacy work within the MDG Campaign, the World Bank/IMF spring meetings 2005, and the forthcoming UN Millennium Plus Five summit. They are also being used to try to strengthen our basic social services programmes, helping us to develop programmes where experience at community level will support delivery of better-quality services nationally. The Mozambique case study has been used to develop the model for Oxfam's new HIV/AIDS programme in this country. The programme aims to

address the inter-departmental and co-ordination problems identified in the case study. It should illustrate means of overcoming the challenge (featured in the case study on the Global Fund) of ensuring that money which is available nationally for HIV-related work, is actually spent.

Access to treatment for poor people

Weak health infrastructure and poor co-ordination between different agencies remain a huge obstacle to prevent poor people receiving the treatment and care that they need for HIV/AIDS and other illnesses. Patent rules continue to jeopardise developing countries' ability to finance adequate treatment programmes. We shall continue to campaign internationally and nationally on these issues, but will support and facilitate developments at the service level in a limited way only.

Developing Oxfam's niche in education programming

Our education programmes are beginning to take on a more holistic approach, addressing issues of gender equality and the quality of education both inside and outside the classroom. This involves working with communities and community organisations linked with schools, such as school management committees and parents' associations, and women's organisations. By building the capacity of women and parents to engage with their children's schooling, we are also contributing to their development as active citizens, who can shape their own development and campaign for their rights.

Developing our analysis of what keeps children, and girls in particular, in school

We are increasingly focusing not only on raising demand for education – where we have had considerable success – but also on understanding the nature of this demand, and the issues linked with sustaining it. This involves looking at how education materials portray girls and women, and the gender messages that they contain. It also means that we are engaging with issues of the quality of girls' educational experiences, and tackling the problem of sexual harassment and abuse of girls in school.

Other fundamental factors also militate against children's, especially girls', attendance at school in many areas of chronic poverty — where children are involved in the family's struggle to collect water, farm in an impoverished environment, generate some income, and, increasingly, cope with the effects of HIV. Initiatives including scholarship programmes, local women employed as *animatrices*, and support to households affected by HIV are all important in supporting girls' attendance. However, it has varied across our different education programme areas as to whether there are the complementary investments (by us or others) in livelihoods development and access to water that support all children's full and continued opportunities for learning.

The need for long-term education programming, and staff development

Our assessments this year have confirmed the importance of making a commitment to developing education programmes over the long term. It entails building the capacity of our staff to ensure that they have the appropriate skills and confidence to lead and manage integrated, community-based, and advocacy programmes. Weak management systems and practices have hampered the development of some of our newer education programmes, but difficulties are now being addressed, in order that we can realise the potential that these programmes offer.

Moving into Southern campaigning

Oxfam's partners are increasingly involved in campaigning during the Global Week of Action, and there is more recognition that this needs to become part of an on-going, planned programme of advocacy, which is integrated into all of our education work. This is essential if the significant investment made in the Global Week of Action in some countries is to have maximum influence. But many national coalitions are still very new and fragile, and require strong support to develop their role. Others need support to ensure that learning from local levels is reflected in national advocacy plans. We need to make stronger links between our Commonwealth Education Fund work and our

advocacy and coalition-building work in non-CEF countries, to promote a greater exchange of experiences. The Commonwealth Education Fund and the Global Campaign for Education have developed better links internationally, but more work needs to be done to ensure that these two Oxfam investments are mutually supportive at a country level.

Global alliances and campaigning on education and the MDGs

Campaigning to achieve adequate financing of education is still necessary. The Fast Track Initiative is still missing the billions of dollars needed to make it work properly. But it is now linked into the plans for an International Financing Facility, so should receive significant funding if the G8 agrees to large-scale investment.

The scale and breadth of the alliances that have come together under *Make Poverty History* and the *Global Call to Action Against Poverty* are unprecedented, and a powerful force for change. Whatever the decisions reached at the G8 meeting, there will be more money for development available globally. We need to plan ahead with allies to keep up the strength of the campaign through to the delivery of funds and actions to overcome poverty. We need to consider the support required by different constituencies to stay involved as debates become more technical, and we need to explore how to convince even more people that poverty is the key political challenge of our generation.

5 The right to be heard

The changes that we want to see in the world

We work towards achieving people's right to be heard as an integral part of all our programming. Under this specific Aim, we focus on increasing institutional accountability, and promoting policy making that considers the needs of people who live in poverty – and includes their active participation. We seek to influence national Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper processes and other policy processes of State and non-State actors.

Progress towards our objectives

Highlights

Supporting citizen engagement in local government. Engagement in developing and monitoring local budgets, and in local accountability processes — for instance in Georgia and Honduras — is enabling citizens to play a more active part in shaping their own development, and is enhancing the accountability of local government structures and processes.

Supporting indigenous peoples to claim their rights. Groups of indigenous peoples in Bolivia have gained title to their territories, and legislative change has established their rights in relation to the planning operations of extractive industries in their territories. Communities have received reparation for damage done by mining activities, and funding for a community development plan.

Holding international institutions to account. Our close involvement with local partners and communities has enabled us to support them with well-informed advocacy and campaigning, both to seek a resolution to problems in programmes supported by the international finance institutions — for example, a forestry programme supported by the World Bank in Cambodia — and to influence World Bank / IMF Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper negotiations — for example in Honduras.

Oxfam takes a rights-based approach in all its work, seeking to transform the vicious cycle of poverty, disempowerment, and conflict into a virtuous cycle, where all people can realise their rights, and where governments and other institutions have both the willingness and capacity to fulfil, protect, and promote people's human rights.

The 'right to be heard' is an end in itself, the answer to the problem of 'voice poverty'. It is also a means to an end, and is integral to Oxfam's manner of working, whether in sustainable livelihoods, basic social services, equity, disaster prevention, conflict reduction, or humanitarian assistance programmes.

For many years, Oxfam has worked with others to increase poor people's voice in relation to policy-making processes of States, and the policies and practices of other powerful institutions. When the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process was introduced by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), we recognised the importance of becoming involved. The PRSP Manual that Oxfam published in 2000, and early work that we did with others on Participatory Poverty Assessments in, for instance, Uganda and Viet Nam, have been significant contributions to improving civil society's ability to influence the policies of the World Bank, IMF, and national governments.

Oxfam's programmes have responded as the PRSP process has moved on from preparation of the plans to implementation, and as failures and gains have been recognised. There have been positive changes on a number of fronts. Lending documents and negotiations are generally more open to

scrutiny. Civil-society organisations have a seat at the table, and a stronger voice in discussions with donors and governments. Donors are less able to pursue special-interest projects, and instead are moving towards harmonising their contributions, and providing budget or programme support.

However, too often these processes have failed to tackle the power dynamics that reinforce the position of local and international elites, and the voices of marginalised and impoverished communities are frequently still not heard. PRSPs have often not addressed key macro-economic and governance issues. In Bolivia, for instance, policy relating to the extractive industry has remained one key issue of popular concern not addressed by the PRSP, and deepening poverty in the country has led to a dramatic rise in popular mobilisation and action, with civil-society organisations aspiring to change the ‘rules of the game’, and demanding a constitutional assembly and the nationalisation of key extractive resources.

The decentralisation processes that are taking place in many countries have provided new opportunities to work with civil society and government agencies to strengthen the accountability of government structures, and the engagement of citizens in policy making. The changes are presenting new challenges too.

In this chapter, we start by surveying programme work which supports poor women and men to engage in decision-making processes of government and other agencies. We illustrate how Oxfam programmes continue to press for improvements in PRSP processes, internationally and within countries. We also look at programmes to strengthen the civil, political, social, and economic rights of indigenous peoples and other minorities.

Engaging in policy-making and implementation

In the assessments conducted this year in Central America, South America, the Caucasus, Yemen, and the UK, we find similar lessons emerging about the engagement of poor women and men in policy-making processes and policy implementation. The examples given below illustrate progress on a number of fronts. Supporting women and men to gain a better understanding of their rights and the responsibilities of government is an important first step to promote their active engagement in policy formation. Working at the local government level to support communities to engage in consultative committees, accountability forums, and budget monitoring, and to lobby for greater participation, is bringing tangible benefits for communities. In Yemen, it has resulted in improved access to basic services for some communities. In Brazil, it has led to greater recognition of urban housing rights by the State. The legitimacy of civil-society organisations is growing in some instances, as programmes have helped them to recognise the importance of listening to poor women and men when developing plans for poverty reduction. The development of alliances has been important in influencing institutions at the national and international levels. And we are seeing how all parties in multi-stakeholder forums need to be prepared to change in order to allow for meaningful participation by, and representation of, poor citizens.

We have reported in previous years on Oxfam’s work with civil society and government in Yemen, during the development of the country’s first PRSP, and then during the implementation process. In particular, we have reported on Oxfam’s persistent efforts to ensure that gender inequality was considered, and addressed. We shall report here on progress being made within government and in civil-society organisations, and some of the benefits that communities are seeing.

Moving on with the PRSP process in Yemen

Ms Hooreya Mashour, the Deputy Chairperson of the Women’s National Committee (WNC) of the Government of Yemen, comments: *‘The initial denial of the government to address gender issues in the formation of the first PRSP gradually changed in the implementation and monitoring stage. This change became more obvious in the formulation process of the second PRSP. Gender has been emphasised as a cross-cutting theme in all sectoral Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) entrusted with the*

preparation of the second MDGs-based PRSP. In addition, the WNC has been mandated with the identification of the non-sectoral "stand-alone" gender needs, such as violence against women, women's political participation, etc. The WNC has been represented in all related structures up to the level of the Higher Committee (a ministerial-level committee) entrusted with the overall supervision of the formulation process. The Ministry of Planning and International Co-operation clearly expressed its commitment to integrate all identified gender needs in the final document, and to emphasise gender in all subsequent stages (2006–2010).

We attribute this change to: (1) the WNC's efforts and commitment to gender, (2) the constant support of Oxfam GB through different interventions to capacitate the WNC, as well as its direct advocacy, lobbying and technical support to various key government stakeholders, and (3) the pressure from donors on the government to integrate gender.'

There are other indications that gender-equality issues are gaining greater recognition by government, and in the ruling political party, the People's National Congress. A National Women's Development Strategy has been drawn up, and was approved in November 2004. The WNC has been advocating a minimum quota of women candidates in elections. In February 2005, the People's General Congress announced that it was reserving 10 per cent of tickets for women candidates in the forthcoming parliamentary election, and 15–20 per cent for women candidates in local council elections. However, the gender-budgeting initiative that Oxfam has promoted in several government ministries has not made such good progress. It is probably too early to introduce this fairly advanced concept.

At the community level, once poor women and men learned about their rights in the context of the PRSP, they started demanding actions to reduce poverty. First, they directed their demands to local civil-society organisations (CSOs). As a result, Oxfam's partner organisations have been able to mobilise US\$1.5m from different sources, including private companies, donors, and the government, for the rehabilitation of water sources, schools, health centres, rural roads, and so on. While this has made services more accessible, quality has not improved, sometimes because of poor co-ordination between government departments. Now poor people are beginning to address their demands to local councils, and are joining CSOs in their advocacy. For instance, the community in Kod Al-Othman demonstrated against a private company's appropriation of land which had been allocated for a primary school.

Changes are seen among partner CSOs too. They have come to recognise the need to focus their work more closely on the needs of people living in poverty. For instance, one of Oxfam's partners, the Al-Mustagbal Association, has started a project aimed at the social integration of marginalised women in three districts, using the prize that it won in the annual competition organised by the World Bank for CSOs in Yemen. CSOs have recognised the benefits of networking, and ten district-level networks have been formed. These are gaining government recognition for their work. The Governor in Aden has provided an office for the local network, having seen the significant work that they were doing, monitoring the PRSP and identifying poverty-reduction projects that had been approved but not implemented. Partner CSOs are becoming more involved in advocacy. For instance, their advocacy for better targeting of financial and other support provided under the Social Welfare Fund resulted in 69 poor families gaining support from the Fund.

At the national level, a CSOs' Thematic Working Group, with representatives from 21 governorates, has been established as part of the monitoring mechanism for the PRSP. It has representation in different PRSP structures, and has, for instance, drafted a 'shadow report' in parallel to the first PRSP Annual Progress Report: an important initiative, although the quality of the Group's report needs to be improved. Significant strides have been made by CSOs, but partners' technical capacity in some specific areas, such as budget analysis, is still quite limited. Oxfam will continue to support them in their development.

The programme started at the end of 2001, and since May 2003 Oxfam has committed £57,800 to its implementation. As we have seen, partner CSOs complemented the contribution from Oxfam through the mobilisation of an additional US\$1.5m. Oxfam's approach has been to work with civil society and government. Good progress has been achieved in our work with government, providing technical support, especially in the work on gender, but also making objective criticisms at times.

In Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, Oxfam actively supported civil-society participation during the development of the PRSPs. However, it was found that poor people did not see the relevance of national policy work to their day-to-day problems. Therefore, while the programmes continues to seek to influence the PRSPs, there is now a strong focus on budget analysis and monitoring, and on strengthening the role and capacity of municipalities. Research is also undertaken on specific issues, such as oil, corruption, and macroeconomic frameworks.

In all three countries, there are indications that the engagements between community members and local authorities on tangible issues is creating greater trust, and helps poor people to develop a better understanding of their rights. For instance, in Azerbaijan, about 60 per cent of 285 local people surveyed felt that *'municipalities are now more capable of helping people'*, and municipality leaders, who now involve communities in budgeting processes, report that their tax collection has increased by 30 per cent. Local budgeting initiatives in Georgia have also brought positive results, as we see in the following case study.

Budget-monitoring in Zugdidi Region, West Georgia

Oxfam's partner in Zugdidi, the Association of Disabled Women and Mothers of Disabled Children (ADW), is supporting four local communities to become involved in monitoring the Zugdidi budget. An 18-year-old woman member of the local budget-monitoring group in Tsaishi village says: *'Gradually, my interest in budgetary processes grew, and I have started discussing our local budget with my peers. This obsession looked weird for someone my age. In the beginning, my counterparts and friends were not interested, but now I have involved them so much that they themselves ask questions about the local and national budget. I am very proud.'*

There are 30 villages in Zugdidi region, and under this budget-monitoring project the 30 representatives of 'local self-governance' in the region have been trained in the relevant budgetary processes, the new Tax Code system, and project writing and fundraising. All 30 local self-governance representatives are men, which reflects the male-dominated political culture of the country. Village members said during the assessment of this project that they would like to see more women leaders in their communities. However, a 46-year-old woman commented: *'Women's pockets cannot endure elections'*. The project has ensured that women and men are equally represented in the village budget-monitoring groups.

Throughout the project the communities have not only learned about their local budgets, but have monitored their implementation and have taken part in drafting the 2005 budgets for their villages, together with the elected local self-governance representative. Quarterly bulletins have been published and monthly radio talks broadcast, dedicated to the budgetary processes. This has contributed significantly to successful lobbying for amendments to the budget of the city of Zugdidi. Unspent budget lines (for the Regional Museum of Tea and the Teachers' Vocational Institute, for example), which create opportunities for money laundering and corruption, have been transferred to education and other social expenditures.

However, the regional government has not yet approved the budgets drawn up with involvement of the community budget-monitoring groups, so local people are feeling that central government does not really support decentralisation and strong involvement of local communities in budgetary processes.

The cost of this project has been £13,500. Two hundred people have been directly involved, and government services in the Sugdidi region cover the population of about 80,000.

In the Central America, Mexico, and Caribbean Region, Oxfam has supported civil society's participation in the PRSP processes in Honduras, Guyana, and Nicaragua. We have sought to strengthen links between communities and national NGOs, and between civil-society organisations working on PRSP processes in the three countries. International NGOs, including Oxfam, have worked together in lobbying governments and donors about PRSP financing and implementation. In Honduras and Nicaragua, our support to local organisations and communities has concentrated on areas where Oxfam also has programmes for sustainable livelihoods, local development, and human rights, in order to maximise the impact achieved. We have seen more tangible gains in these countries than in Guyana, where our work has been less systematic and strategic. In the following case study, we discuss some of the achievements and lessons from the work in Honduras.

Working with the PRSP and other policy-making processes in Honduras

Although the implementation process for the PRSP provides a degree of participation for civil society, the complicated system of mobilising resources is creating frustration and distrust in the process. For example, PRSP funding partly depends on debt-cancellation funds from the international community, and this in turn depends on compliance with the economic adjustment policies of the World Bank and the IMF. Long-lasting negotiations between unions and the government turned into a two-year dispute with the IMF over salaries in the education and health sectors which resulted in delayed debt relief and donor cuts amounting to US\$194m. Oxfam supported its partner FOSDEH to produce a paper on the issue, and attend the 2004 spring meetings of the World Bank and IMF to highlight the situation. Meetings were held with senior staff of both agencies, and there was considerable media coverage of the story. The lobbying and advocacy of FOSDEH and other civil-society organisations contributed to the conclusion of an agreement between the unions and government, and with the IMF.

A positive development at the national level is that, after pressure from civil society, the government has earmarked 30 per cent of the 2005–06 national budget to support PRSP projects. Now that the completion point has been reached in the approval process for the Honduras PRSP (April 2005), civil-society organisations will be able to introduce six programmes and 33 projects on land access, basic social services, credit access, and agricultural support, to be funded by the release of HIPC funds.

And at the local level there are positive results from Oxfam's support for communities involved in its sustainable livelihood and marketing programme to engage in local governance processes, as more spaces are opening up for participation. In particular, it has been found that training local leaders in advocacy and negotiation techniques has been important in facilitating constructive engagements with government and other parties, as opposed to the confrontational approach of the past. The building of alliances has also been crucial. In one significant development, municipal authorities, the National Council of the Maya Chorti indigenous group, and local land owners sat down together to negotiate a solution concerning the legalisation of land granted to the Maya Chortis by the national government. About 2,000 citizens have been involved in accountability-focused open forums with municipal authorities, and transparency commissions have been created to undertake social audits of municipal funds. Local Community Development Committees requested funds amounting to US\$555,100 from central government for projects prioritised by the communities, which would benefit 4,500 people. The Committees are monitoring the implementation of 21 such projects, and another 56 proposals are waiting to be cleared.

Oxfam is also working to support poor citizens in urban areas to engage in policy-making processes. For example, our partners are working with shantytown dwellers in Brazil, and were instrumental in the creation and approval of the ‘Solidarity Credit Programme’ by the State. This programme will build houses for low-income families who live in peri-urban areas and who have irregular employment. Our partners are also playing a crucial role in lobbying for greater participation in the development of Master Plans in eight cities where we work. A Master Plan is a document that municipalities with a population of more than 20,000 people are required to produce; in each case, the City Hall is obliged to use it as the basis for its administration of the city. In Fortaleza city, Oxfam’s partner Cearah Periferia, reacting to the lack of civil-society participation in the first version of the city’s Master Plan, implemented a campaign ‘For a Participatory Master Plan’ and succeeded in re-opening discussions. As a result of this experience, the Ministry of Cities has decided to implement a National Campaign for the Implementation of Participatory Master Plans, which will be based on the campaign designed by Cearah Periferia. In our assessment of our urban programme, community leaders and residents confirmed that shantytown dwellers are growing in self-esteem and recognising their rights as citizens: ‘*Nowadays, I know what the channels are; where I can demand my rights and fight for improvements in the community. Today I have information.... we have rights and we are citizens,*’ says Mrs Claudia Alves Clementino, 31, who moved to Rio Branca city 11 years ago, searching for better opportunities.

Just as in the case studies presented above, case studies in other chapters of this report — for instance from the livelihood programme in Shire Highlands of Malawi and from the education programme in northern Mozambique — have shown that supporting communities to know their rights and participate in local civic processes is forging new relationships between rights-holders and duty-bearers.

Claiming rights and holding institutions to account

Several of Oxfam’s programmes in South America focus on supporting indigenous people and other marginalised groups to claim their rights. In Brazil, the federal government has been disappointingly reluctant to issue territorial land titles to indigenous groups. However, several Quilombolas (rural communities of African-Brazilian descent) have received their titles, and a decree was recently signed, recognising the indigenous territory in the north of Brazil called *Raposa Serra do Sol*. Oxfam partners have worked for 30 years to get titles in this area signed, so it is a significant step.

In Peru, an *Identity Campaign* was supported by a large coalition of private and public institutions in the Citizen Rights Alliance. The campaign successfully achieved the removal of the requirement to produce a military-service document in order to get a national identity card. This requirement was an obstacle to poor rural women obtaining identity cards and other documents, as families feared abuse of young women by soldiers during the necessary trip to a military station to acquire the document. Almost 20,000 women have received their identity document for the first time since the change in requirements. Oxfam’s Rights, Inclusion, and Development programme in Peru has developed good working relationships with some State agencies, which has helped to bring a stronger rights and ‘pro-poor’ focus to their work. The clearest example comes from the Ombudsman: a representative of the Ombudsman commented that the programme had helped the agency to develop a new ‘vision’ concerning identity problems. Instead of reacting negatively when a citizen presents a complaint, the new vision is that the agency will be actively involved in influencing the processes that are causing exclusion.

As we reported last year, Oxfam has worked with indigenous communities in Bolivia for more than ten years. In the following case study, we report on progress in the current programme, which was developed with the involvement of indigenous leaders, local people, and partner organisations. This established a shared vision for the work between all parties, based on clear criteria for the impact desired. The organisations involved in the programme show a huge social commitment beyond their institutional interests. By uniting the plurality of opinions and approaches represented by these different organisations under a shared vision, this programme is helping to enhance the exercise of

democracy from within the programme itself. Oxfam is contributing to building a partnership of efforts by institutions, communities, and other donors, who have placed their faith in the development of indigenous peoples. Positive changes have been seen at many levels, but the current political instability and a move away from a focus on poverty reduction in government priorities is impeding progress.

The rights and development of indigenous peoples in Bolivia

The programme reaches a population of 180,000 indigenous people in lowland areas of Bolivia. They can be seen to be gaining more power and influence as a result of their campaigning, increased political representation, and a greater recognition of the legitimacy of their claims. Their main claim, with strong national support, is for a Constitutional Assembly that will recognise their rights.

Massive numbers of indigenous people take part in demonstrations and lobbying activities. The emergence of strong alliances of indigenous people from the highlands and the lowlands is serving to counterbalance the separatist movements led by the economic elite in the eastern region, where agri-business, oil, and gas operations are centred. In 2004, the Fifth Indigenous March in Bolivia was led by Oxfam's partners; following the march, the government made a commitment to include indigenous people in the National Agrarian Development Strategy. A total of US\$32m has been set aside for production activities nationally, intended to benefit small-scale farmers and indigenous people. The march also obtained a commitment from the government to issue titles to indigenous community territories, and revoke laws classifying land as protected private property, which benefited large landowners in the area.

Indigenous people are gaining greater representation in local and national government. In the most recent municipal elections, after intensive training, more indigenous people and small-scale farmers won seats. There are now 52 indigenous councillors — 40 per cent of them women — in the 56 municipalities, and three indigenous mayors in the three main towns in Santa Cruz region.

Government and private companies are recognising the legitimacy of indigenous people's demands. After much negotiation, campaigning, and vigils, led by the indigenous organisations involved in the programme, parliamentary approval has been given to a specific article on indigenous rights within the new Hydrocarbons Law. This gives indigenous peoples the power to object to, or approve, operations by extractive industries in their territories. It also gives indigenous peoples the right to share in the profits, gain access to development plans and projects, and receive fair compensation for environmental and/or social damage.

Partners have supported communities to pursue specific cases concerning the extractive industries within their territories. One complaint concerned the Don Mario mine's negative impacts on indigenous communities and the natural resources in their territory. COMSUR, which was founded by ex-President Sánchez de Lozada, owns shares in and has invested in the development of the mine. The World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC)³⁰ holds 11 per cent equity in COMSUR.

Indigenous organisations presented a formal complaint to the Office of the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman (CAO) of the IFC. The CAO accepted the complaint and, following an on-site assessment, recommended an audit of COMSUR to assess its environment and social development capacity and activities. At the start of 2004 the auditors recommended to COMSUR that it should re-design its community relations policies to repair the damage to the communities in the area of the Don Mario mine, applying a sustainability approach. The communities have subsequently been provided with funding for a community development plan. This has given the five indigenous communities and 220 families involved a tool for managing their territory, and five social and livelihood development projects will be implemented.

³⁰ IFC – the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank provides support to the private sector.

As a result of the recommendations made by the CAO, the IFC is also pushing COMSUR to review its social and environmental policies in relation to five mines and two refineries in other regions of the country. Impact on a progressively larger scale is therefore emerging, benefiting a significant number of communities and indigenous peoples in the highlands as well as the lowlands. An important precedent has been set by a company that is moving beyond mere reparations for damage, to exercising social responsibility towards the communities affected.

The cost of the programme in 2004–05 was about £306,000. Oxfam contributed about £126,000; partners received £151,000 from other donors, and partners contributed £29,000 from their own resources.

In terms of the component of the programme that relates to extractive industries, the financial support provided is leading to huge benefits. Oxfam gave US\$40,000 in the first phase of the work, and has contributed US\$95,000 over the past three years. During the first phase, compensation payments amounting to US\$2.3m were made to communities. Since then, mining operations which were affecting 28 communities have been halted, and compensation in relation to COMSUR's mines is being negotiated. And an Indigenous Development Fund is to be set up, using public revenues from the royalties paid on hydrocarbons.

In Georgia too, Oxfam's partners have supported the pursuit of complaints concerning extractive industries. In response to the impact of the construction of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan oil pipeline on local communities, partners supported the establishment of four Supervisory Committees in seven regions, and 500 people affected by the construction of pipeline were consulted. They were made aware that they can defend their rights through the local courts, the appeals process of the BTC Company, and the Ombudsman's Office of the IFC. Eighty per cent of people have gone on to make a complaint. Most of the complaints are still under consideration because of protracted court procedures, but some people have received compensation for lost land; damaged roads and water systems have been repaired; and houses have been reconstructed.

We have previously reported on representations made by Oxfam and others to the World Bank concerning its support for a forestry project in Cambodia. The story has not yet ended.

The World Bank's forestry lending in Cambodia

In 2000, the World Bank's Washington office began providing loans and technical assistance to the Cambodian government, in a scheme that was supposed to reform the practice of the foreign and Cambodian companies that had been granted concessions to cut and sell timber in Cambodia's forests. In theory, the companies would fell the trees at a 'sustainable' rate so that the forest was maintained, and the government would earn tax revenues from the companies. As the project got underway, forest cover disappeared at an alarming rate, and villagers were denied access to land that they had been using. In addition, the companies pleaded lack of profitability, so the government received few or no tax revenues from them. The companies failed to produce Sustainable Forest Management Plans (SFMPs) as required by September 2001, so a moratorium was placed on logging in the concessions from December 2001, at the urging of the Bank.

The situation came to a head in December 2002 when villagers were protesting about the actions of the companies, the Cambodian government, and the World Bank's support. Most of the companies had finally produced SFMPs, but their quality was poor. Little time was allowed for public comment on the plans, but representatives of forest-dependent communities travelled to Phnom Penh to present their views to the Forestry Department. Their written comments were rejected, and they were denied the opportunity to discuss them. Outside the Department's office they were violently dispersed by riot police, resulting in a dozen injuries and one death. Oxfam and others entreated the World Bank's regional and country offices to reconsider their support, as it sent all the wrong messages to the government about the types of

intervention that reduced poverty and promoted sustainable development. Negotiations continued for one and a half years, with interim victories and temporary setbacks.

Then in early 2004, a new World Bank Project Manager visited Cambodia. NGO representatives once again raised their concerns with him, and he said that if they believed that they had a credible case, they should *'take it to the Inspection Panel'*. Negotiations continued during 2004, but in January 2005, Oxfam's partner, the NGO Forum on Cambodia, acting as a 'representative of affected local communities', submitted to the World Bank Inspection Panel a request for an inspection of the Forest Concession Management and Control Pilot Project. Global Witness, another Oxfam partner, provided a full analysis for the case against the Bank's project, and this was submitted as background material for the claim. Three panel members from the World Bank Inspection Panel visited to assess the eligibility of the claim and in April 2005, announced their findings. They concluded:

'The Request and Management Response contain conflicting assertions and interpretations about the issues, the facts, and compliance with Bank policies and procedures. In light of the foregoing, the Panel recommends that an investigation be conducted.'

So while neither the process, nor the story, is over, this case demonstrates the importance of persistence in efforts to hold global institutions accountable for the rights of people living in poverty. It also demonstrates the importance of collaboration between civil-society organisations at different levels.

International advocacy and campaigning

The international finance institutions

At the global level, Oxfam's attention in the last few years to the interconnectedness of people's rights to fair trade rules, increased and improved aid policies, and cancellation of debt is increasingly reflected in the donor community and among staff throughout the international finance institutions (IFIs). Well-researched policy documents and campaigning activities by Oxfam and allies, often at IFI meetings, have reinforced this triad of issues. This work has been supplemented by campaigning on particular issues, for example the Fast Track Initiative for education, and advocacy to persuade the IMF to revalue its gold to provide funds for additional debt relief. Oxfam has supported partners to present specific case studies that illustrate ways in which IMF policies are hampering development programmes in Honduras and Zambia. This campaigning and case studies have been described in this and other chapters of this report.

Oxfam also made a significant contribution to the PRSP review undertaken by the World Bank and IMF over the last two years. A policy paper entitled 'The IMF and MDGs: Failing to Deliver' was published in August 2003, and 'From Donorship to Ownership? Moving towards PRSP Round Two' was published in January 2004. During a conference, soon after the release of the IMF's and World Bank's PRSP review reports, the author of the IMF report publicly spoke of the influence of Oxfam's submissions. A number of the recommendations in the IMF report reflected measures that Oxfam had advocated, such as the greater use of Poverty and Social Impact Analysis. Our advocacy had less influence on the World Bank's review.

Pan-Africa

Oxfam's Pan-Africa programme has supported partners' campaigning on a range of continental and international public policy issues. In other chapters, some of these initiatives have been described, for example work with the Solidarity for African Women's Rights coalition in seeking the ratification and implementation of the Africa Union Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa, and in seeking commitments from the Africa Union on access to affordable medicines, particularly for HIV/AIDS. There has been a series of recent interventions concerning debt cancellation, the quality and quantity of aid, African domestic governance, and the deliberations of the Commission for Africa.

The climax of recent work was the emergence of the Africa section of the *Global Call to Action Against Poverty*. Seventy organisations from 25 countries across Africa met at the end of March 2005. Under the guidance of a steering committee of regional networks, international NGOs, and the UN Millennium Campaign, the organisations agreed on a set of unifying actions on ‘white band days’ throughout 2005. With this agreement, and subsequent activities, Africa looks set to play a visible and influential part in important events around the G8 July summit, the UN Millennium Plus Five summit, and the WTO Inter-ministerial Assembly. Oxfam has played an active part in the Steering Committee, has managed the Secretariat for the March meeting, and has supported the network to obtain funds for follow-up actions.

Oxfam’s Pan-Africa programme works almost entirely by accompanying and resourcing partners. Oxfam is not only a donor to partners. We are a strategic ally, provoking actions and the building of coalitions, reaching out and introducing partners to new relationships, stepping aside for partners to speak when approached by the African Union and others. The programme seeks to influence public policy through a mix of lobbying, publicity, and constituency building to achieve changes at the continental and international levels.

Lessons, issues, and risks

Citizen engagement at different levels of government policy making

More Oxfam country programmes are using the opportunities that government decentralisation processes provide to support the engagement of poor people in local authority policy-making and development initiatives. Staff recognise the benefits of working with both local authorities and communities, to raise awareness about rights and duties, and to strengthen systems for accountability. Importantly, by working at this level, poor people can often see their representations lead to tangible changes which benefit their communities. This shift to an emphasis on working on pro-poor policy development at a local level has arisen partly from frustration with the PRSP process and its outcomes at a national level. We continue to work at local, national, and international levels on policy-making processes, but linking work at different levels is a challenge. For example, lack of political will, inefficient government processes, and lack of access to information and data are making it difficult to link local budget-monitoring initiatives to budget monitoring at national level in various countries where we work. We have sought to develop our understanding of working at a local government level by developing some case studies about decentralisation processes, and a guide to good practice will be published in 2005.

Linking work on the right to be heard with other aims

Where we have concentrated ‘right to be heard’ work in the same locations as other programme work, especially on livelihoods, the results are considered to have been enhanced, as mentioned in relation to work in Honduras and Nicaragua. Case studies in other chapters of this report showed too how education on rights and supporting the engagement of poor people in local policy making and civic responsibilities such as service on school councils have been found to enhance the impact of programmes. More country programmes, for example Peru and the UK, are now reporting that they are shifting towards greater integration of their right-to-be-heard work with other programmes.

Exclusion of minorities and marginalised groups

We need to keep asking ourselves who is involved in the different processes that are opening up for citizens to engage in policy-making. Oxfam continues to have strong programmes in support of indigenous peoples, pastoralist communities, *dalits* (low-caste communities in India), and other minorities to achieve their civil, political, economic, and social rights. But, more generally, we have seen through our work on the PRSP process and other processes for citizen engagement that very poor and marginalised people, and women in particular, often remain excluded or under-represented, and elites at local or national level, and NGOs without strong links to poor communities, can dominate forums.

Participation and empowerment

Participation does not automatically lead to empowerment. Assisting people to achieve their rights has an obvious legal dimension, but there are also important political and social dimensions to this work, which involve work to change power relations within society. Several Oxfam programmes have reflected on the way in which the unequal power held by different people within networks, multi-stakeholder forums, and partnerships affects the quality and value of participation. This was illustrated in the case study from Ghana about a producers' network (reported in the chapter on the right to a sustainable livelihood). In this instance, the presence of advocacy NGOs in the network was constraining the empowerment of poor producer representatives. From the UKPP's work to develop anti-poverty networks, we recognised the necessity of network members creating an environment that really levels the uneven balance of power between those living in poverty, decision makers, and implementers. If those governing a forum unilaterally set the terms under which people living in poverty are invited to participate, the experience for the latter will not be an empowering one. All parties in multi-stakeholder forums need to be open to change. We recognise that Oxfam is not external to these processes either, but also a powerful actor in the contexts in which it works. In the words of our Rights, Inclusion and Development programme in Peru, Oxfam is neither making diagnoses nor trying to exert influence from outside, but aspiring to act as part of social change processes. It concludes *'If you want change, you must be open to change, you must change yourself'*.

Rights and the political environment

The challenges for our 'right to be heard' work are huge in the many sensitive and complex political environments in which we work. Our Central America, Caribbean, and Mexico Region reports that advocacy by civil society is often being condemned as political opposition by governments at all levels, and a series of new political reforms on security and 'good governance' is becoming a mechanism for violating civil and political rights. In other Regions too, where we work in areas of conflict, where States are fragile, and where corruption is rife, there are challenges for Oxfam and other international agencies in deciding what role we can most appropriately play to protect and enhance poor people's rights. Across our work on 'the right to be heard', we should consider the opportunities for more active engagement with parliaments and political processes.

Competing agendas and their impact on poverty

The threats that Free Trade Agreements and private company agendas pose to pro-poor development mean that they have, increasingly, become a focus of our attention. On the other hand, PRSPs tend to have a focus on social-service developments, and are not doing much to address issues concerning the macro-economy, good governance, justice, and human rights. We need to continue to work with civil-society organisations to strengthen future PRSPs and other national poverty-reduction plans.

Supporting international networks in holding institutions to account

Our Pan-Africa programme has grown in strength over the last year. Moving forward, it will continue to cultivate change champions within partner agencies and among our own staff to drive the work forward, and take over leadership of the campaigns and advocacy work. We will continue to support the development of African networks into sustainable institutions which are effective in representing civil society and influencing African Union (AU) policy and practice. This will also involve deepening our understanding of the policy-making process of the AU summits, and ways in which various campaigning techniques can most effectively be applied.

Rich-country accountability

In 2005, the accountability of rich countries to honour their commitments on aid, debt and trade is a major priority of our campaigning with others in the *Global Call to Action Against Poverty* and *Make Poverty History* alliances. As noted in other chapters, these alliances represent an unprecedented movement to hold rich countries to account. We shall also continue to support our partners in the presentation of specific case studies to the World Bank and IMF, where their policies, practices, or programmes are failing to support poverty reduction, or protect the livelihoods of people living in poverty.

Democratising our own development practice

Our own accountability to partner agencies and to poor women and men involved in, and affected by, our programmes is crucial. Staff in various parts of Oxfam are seeking to establish a clear set of partnership principles and accountability mechanisms. The UK Poverty Programme has worked with partners to explore a set of minimum standards for participation, and we are looking at the set of principles developed by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership – International, and their application to development programmes. We aim to be a rights-based organisation. This demands that we enshrine participation and transparency in all our relationships, and understand the factors that can undermine these principles. Strengthening our own practice in this respect remains a priority for us.