

MY RIGHTS MY VOICE

GLOBAL PROGRAMME OVERVIEW



PHOTO: AMI VITALE



OXFAM

MY RIGHTS, MY VOICE

- Children and young people have huge potential to transform their lives and communities. With the right skills, support and opportunities they can be a driving force to break the cycle of poverty so many are born into.
- To help them achieve their potential, their rights to health and education must be fulfilled. That is why Oxfam GB and Oxfam Novib are running a three-year programme, My Rights, My Voice, in eight countries – Afghanistan, Georgia, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Tanzania and Viet Nam.
- Activities in each country are tailored to the specific contexts and conditions children and young people experience, but all come together in a wider global programme that inspires learning, innovation and sharing of experience.
- Working with children and young people, and those who influence their lives, My Rights, My Voice is empowering them to achieve lasting changes in policies, practices and beliefs, so their health and education needs are met – now and in the future.

WHY MY RIGHTS, MY VOICE?

Children and young people have a vital role in reducing poverty and transforming their societies. With the right support, their energy and ideas can change their lives – and our world. Yet their potential is mostly overlooked. With an unprecedented 2.6 billion children and young people in developing countries, this potential has never been greater. But to play an active part in improving their communities, they need free, good-quality health care and education.

These basic needs are often not met.

Children and young people are rarely consulted in decisions affecting their lives. Girls and young women especially face inequality and discrimination – often denied education, forced into marriage or suffering early pregnancy. As the Millennium Development Goals deadline approaches in 2015, the world looks set to miss targets for improving health care and schooling.

In response, two of Oxfam's 15 worldwide affiliates – Oxfam GB (Great Britain) and Oxfam Novib (The Netherlands) – launched My Rights, My Voice at the end of 2011. Oxfam Quebec also plays a significant role in one of the eight country projects. The three-year programme works with children and young people, along with their care-givers (parents, teachers, doctors, and others) to improve their access to and the quality of education and health care they receive. By increasing knowledge of their rights, improving their confidence and creating opportunities for them to influence decision-makers, we are working with a diversity of children and young people to empower them to work with others and shape their futures. The programme builds on existing work, but with a new approach centring on children and young people as 'active citizens', and working with them – not only for them – so they can fulfil their potential.

TAILORED LOCALLY, UNITED GLOBALLY

My Rights, My Voice has eight country projects, tailored to the different experiences of children and young people in each. We work with local partner organisations, who are best placed to work closely with children and young people on health and education issues.

Although they are independent, these country projects all seek to fulfil children's and young people's rights to quality health (including sexual and reproductive health) and education services. From this common basis, they join together under the global My Rights, My Voice programme, which stands alongside them, supporting and inspiring learning, innovation and the sharing of experience. Each individual country project helps others and is in turn strengthened.

TACKLING THE KEY PROBLEMS

My Rights, My Voice addresses key issues and problems holding back the next generations worldwide. These can seem overwhelming – but by working with others, children and young people can find solutions. The programme includes a diverse range of activities tackling the specific issues they face, among them:

Complications in pregnancy and childbirth are the lead killers of girls aged 15-19.

In Pakistan, we are using edutainment and mass communication to inspire people caring for adolescents to support sexual and reproductive health education. And although Nepal has free health care, many children, young people and young mothers are not aware of their right to it. We are helping them claim the services they are entitled to.



PHOTO: ABBIE TRAYLER-SMITH

In 2008, a fifth of adolescents aged 10-19 were not in school. A third were still in primary school. We are helping students in Tanzania to form elected councils, so they can raise issues and influence school decision-making. In Viet Nam, we are equipping children – especially girls and those from ethnic minorities – with skills to understand their rights, identify their needs and communicate with school authorities and policymakers.

Almost 15 per cent of girls in developing countries are married before they are 15, almost 40 per cent before 18. In Niger, we are tackling barriers which prevent children, especially girls, from attending school. These include early pregnancy and marriage. In Mali, we are implementing an innovative e-learning scheme, helping young people demand respect for their sexual and reproductive rights.

More than 1.8 million people aged 15-24 die each year – mostly from preventable causes. In Afghanistan and Georgia, we are helping children and young people establish youth

clubs so they can advocate for their rights to health and education. They are holding community awareness-raising sessions, joining national campaigns and working with the media to ensure that government, donors, society, elders and parents recognise these rights. We are working with partners, communities and most significantly, young people, to address these issues and many more.

A LASTING LEGACY

Children and young people have a vital role in tackling poverty – but they need quality education and health services if they are to play their part. My Rights, My Voice will have the greatest impact by enabling them to drive demand for these services themselves – young people as active citizens, actively engaged, empowered and informed to demand their rights. Not only will they benefit from better health care and schooling, but they will carry through life the skills and confidence to shape their futures – and those of their own children.

FIND OUT MORE

My Rights, My Voice is a three-year programme which aims to engage marginalised children and youth in their rights to health and education services. It is being jointly implemented by Oxfam GB and Oxfam Novib, and involves Oxfam Quebec in Niger. Working through our local partners in eight countries, My Rights, My Voice has significant funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

To find out more about the programme please mail us at: mrmv@oxfam.org.uk or visit us at www.oxfam.org.uk/myrightsmyvoicee

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