

Foreword by Graça Machel

Founder, Graça Machel Trust

The last decades have seen incredible human progress – across Africa and the world. But this progress is under threat from the scourge of rapidly rising inequality.

This report from Oxfam is a stark and timely portrait of the growing inequality which characterises much of Africa and the world today. Seven out of ten people live in countries where inequality is growing fast, and those at the top of society are leaving the rest behind.

Addressing the gap between the richest people and the poorest and the impact this gap has on other pervasive inequalities between men and women and between races that make life for those at the bottom unbearable is an imperative of our times. Too many children born today have their future held hostage by the low income of their parents, their gender and their race.

The good news is that this growing inequality is not inevitable. It can be resolved. The report contains many examples of success to give us inspiration. I hope that many people from government officials, business and civil society leaders, and bilateral and multilateral institutions will examine this report, reflect on its recommendations and take sustained actions which will tackle the inequality explosion.

Kofi Annan

Chair of the Africa Progress Panel, former Secretary-General of the United Nations and Nobel Laureate

The widening gap between rich and poor is at a tipping point. It can either take deeper root, jeopardising our efforts to reduce poverty, or we can make concrete changes now to reverse it. This valuable report by Oxfam is an exploration of the problems caused by extreme inequality and the policy options governments can take to build a fairer world, with equal opportunities for us all. This report is a call to action for a common good. We must answer that call.

Professor Joseph Stiglitz

Columbia University, winner of Nobel Prize for Economics

The extreme inequality in incomes and assets we see in much of the world today harms our economies, our societies, and undermines our politics. While we should all worry about this it is of course the poorest who suffer most, experiencing not just vastly unequal outcomes in their lives, but vastly unequal opportunities too. Oxfam's report is a timely reminder that any real effort to end poverty has to confront the public policy choices that create and sustain inequality.

Nawal El Saadawi**Egyptian writer and activist**

Oxfam's report reveals a new challenge to the capitalist patriarchal world and its so-called free market. We need to fight together, globally and locally, to build a new world based on real equality between people regardless of gender, class, religion, race, nationality, identity or other.

Andrew Haldane**Chief Economist, Bank of England**

When Oxfam told us in January 2014 that the world's 85 richest people have the same wealth as the poorest half of humanity, they touched a moral nerve among the many. Now this comprehensive report goes beyond the statistics to explore the fundamental relationship between inequality and enduring poverty. It also presents some solutions. In highlighting the problem of inequality Oxfam not only speaks to the interests of the poorest people but in our collective interest: there is rising evidence that extreme inequality harms, durably and significantly, the stability of the financial system and growth in the economy. It retards development of the human, social and physical capital necessary for raising living standards and improving well-being. That penny is starting to drop among policymakers and politicians. There is an imperative – moral, economic and social – to develop public policy measures to tackle growing inequality. Oxfam's report is a valuable stepping stone towards that objective.

Jeffrey Sachs**Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University**

Oxfam has done it again: a powerful call to action against the rising trend of inequality across the world. And the report comes just in time, as the world's governments are about to adopt Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Sustainable development means economic prosperity that is inclusive and environmentally sustainable. Yet too much of today's growth is neither inclusive nor sustainable. The rich get richer while the poor and the planet pay the price. Oxfam spells out how we can and must change course: fairer taxation, ending tax and secrecy havens, equal access of the rich and poor to vital services including health and education; and breaking the vicious spiral of wealth and power by which the rich manipulate our politics to enrich themselves even further. Oxfam charts a clear course forward. We should all rally to the cause of inclusive, sustainable growth at the core of next year's SDGs.

Jay Naidoo

Chair of the Board of Directors and Chair of the Partnership Council, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

All those who care about our common future should read this report from Oxfam. Rising inequality has become the greatest threat to world peace, and indeed to the survival of the human species. The increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of very few has deepened both ecological and economic crises, which in turn has led to an escalation of violence in every corner of our burning planet.

Rosa Pavanelli

Secretary General, Public Services International

The answers Oxfam provides are simple, smart and entirely achievable. All that stands between them and real change is a lack of political will. Our job is to make the cry heard. To give action to the urgency. To ceaselessly expose the injustice and demand its resolution. The time to act is now.

Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson

Co-authors of *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*

This report is the first step in changing the policies which have enriched the few at the expense of the many. It is essential reading for all governments, for policy makers and everyone who has had enough of sacrificing public wellbeing to the 1 per cent.

Ha-Joon Chang

Economist at the University of Cambridge

Even It Up is the best summary yet of why tackling inequality is crucial to global development. The gulf between haves and have-nots is both wrong in itself, and a source of needless human and economic waste. I urge you to read it, and join the global campaign for a fairer world.

Michael J. Sandel

*Author of **What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets***

The growing gap between rich and poor makes poverty more intractable. It also erodes the civic bonds and common life that democracy requires. Oxfam's inequality campaign will invigorate public debate about one of the great moral challenges of our time.

Kevin Watkins

*Executive Director, **Overseas Development Institute***

Inequality is the defining social justice issue of our day. The vast gaps in wealth and opportunity evident in so many countries are unconscionable and indefensible. Changing the policies that drive inequality will require not just top quality research, but campaigning, the development of new coalitions, and organisations with the conviction needed to challenge vested interests and take the side of those being left behind. Oxfam is uniquely well-placed to lead – and this report deserves a wide readership.

Mark Thomas

*Partner and Head of Strategy, **PA Consulting Services***

This powerful and well-researched report highlights a number of important factors which are often missing in discussions of inequality. Firstly, that it is not merely a relative question – in absolute terms, when inequality rises this fast, the mass of the population actually gets poorer, even as the economy grows; secondly, that the process of rising inequality is not an inevitable consequence of natural laws, it is the result of policy choices we have made over recent decades; thirdly, that unless we take action to address the dynamics that fuel rising inequality, the problems we see today will become even more severe with profoundly dangerous consequences; and therefore, fourthly, that action is urgent.

Jayati Ghosh

*Professor of Economics at **Jawaharlal Nehru University***

Oxfam's new report shows in telling fashion that rising inequality is not a result of inevitable economic forces; rather, it is the outcome of politics and power relations, that have determined both policies and economic outcomes. This identifies practical and feasible strategies for reducing these inequalities and moving towards for more equal and just societies, globally and within nations.

Amina J Mohammed

Special Advisor of the UN Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning

Inequality - related to race, gender, ethnicity, disability, age, income and/or location - is one of the root causes of deprivation, violence and conflict across the globe. I am therefore pleased to welcome this timely reminder of an urgent issue which is at the core of the sustainable development agenda and which, sadly, applies across all borders. In order to leave no one behind, concrete actions are needed to promote equality in all its facets.

Sharan Burrow

General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

Today millions of working people are struggling to provide for their families and the hopes of a better future for their children are at stake. Corporate dominance is capturing governments and putting jobs and economies at risk. The counterbalance and the basis of democracy is the power of working people and their families and communities.

Even It Up puts workplace democracy at the heart of solutions to tackle inequality. We know that people want governments to tame corporate power and put the interests of working people first.

People want governments to intervene to guarantee that companies pay workers a living wage, to close tax loopholes and to implement a social protection floor. Together with Oxfam, we demand that that governments change the rules so the economic system stops favouring the wealthy and is fair to everyone.