
INSPIRING RADICALLY BETTER FUTURES

Evidence and Hope for Impact at Scale in a
Time of Crisis

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The world faces converging crises of health, climate, gender and racial injustice and extreme economic inequality. The calls are mounting to ‘build back better’ to create more inclusive, caring and environmentally sustainable futures. But what evidence exists that this is possible? The Inspiring Better Futures case study series investigates whether radical change at scale is possible and how it was achieved. This paper synthesises 18 cases which show that people are already successfully building better futures, benefitting millions of people, even against the odds in some of the world’s toughest contexts in lower-income countries. Together they offer hope that transformative change and radically better futures after the pandemic are within reach.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHOOSING HOPE

The world needs hope.

The converging crises of the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate and ecological emergency, extreme economic inequality and shocking gender and racial injustice are exacerbating existing inequalities, plunging millions more people into poverty and creating profound environmental harm.

The crisis is also an opportunity for fundamental change, as is clear from the multiplying calls from around the world to 'build back better' after the pandemic. But what evidence is there that a radically better future is possible?

Oxfam's *Inspiring Better Futures* series looks beyond the rallying calls for action to investigate if it is possible to create a more inclusive, kinder and sustainable world, and, if so, how it can be achieved and by whom?

As this synthesis paper shows, the case studies in the series offer hope. Not wishful thinking, but hope based on evidence that a better world is within our reach, as well as the moral belief that it is worth fighting for. **Together the 18 case studies show that people are already successfully creating better futures, benefitting millions of their fellow citizens and protecting and restoring environmental health, even against the odds in some of the world's toughest and most fragile contexts.**

The growing calls for a just, inclusive and green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic make the insights gained from the cases more pertinent than ever. **They offer compelling examples of the types of practical but transformative initiatives that can and should be implemented to genuinely 'build back better' lives, in a way that reduces inequalities and supports the transition to a zero-carbon future.** By helping reduce poverty, inequalities and environmental harm, the cases also offer important pathways to build resilience to and reduce the impacts of future pandemics or shock.

THE CASES

The cases focus on solutions to the crises of climate, gender and economic injustice. Unusually they include examples from only lower-income, rather than also wealthier OECD countries, and focus on meso (i.e. between micro and macro-level change¹), rather than macro-level country studies or micro project level change. The cases represent a small fraction of the positive change that is happening in the world. They do not offer blueprints for change: change journeys are always context specific. Neither are they perfect. Yet what they do offer are important insights about how people can set about creating a better world.

WHAT IMPACT WAS ACHIEVED

Together, the cases show that it is possible to **achieve transformative impact at scale**:

- In lower-income countries, even those afflicted by conflict, with extreme economic or gender inequalities, few political freedoms or highly vulnerable to the climate crisis – setting a powerful precedent and challenge for change elsewhere;
- That individually reaches and benefits tens of thousands of women and men, and collectively millions;
- That generates multiple benefits, with several cases simultaneously helping to reduce poverty, address economic and gender injustice and protect the environment;
- That is inclusive and reduces poverty, if, and, where there is equitable design and affected people are involved in design and delivery;

Box 1: Interconnected struggles of poverty, injustice and environmental harm

The cases show that reversing poverty, inequality, and environmental destruction do not need to be tackled by separate struggles but can and should be tackled together.

- **Tackling climate change or restore environmental health can also reduce poverty and inequality.** Brazil's previous Bolsa Verde social protection scheme provided income support to 74,522 people in one of the remotest areas of the Amazon while simultaneously helping to reduce deforestation there by over 40%. In West Africa, 'Regreening the Sahel' has resulted in more food and more income for over three million people while also helping to reverse the spread of desertification. Zambia's 'Beyond the Grid' has provided 875,810 people, a quarter of whom are female headed households, with clean and affordable energy simultaneously improving health and education and creating jobs while reducing carbon emissions.
- **Reducing gender and economic injustice can also address environmental problems.** The Mahila Housing Trust has supported women living in informal settlements in India, Nepal and Bangladesh to influence local municipalities to improve the quality and reach of vital water and sanitation services for 1.8 million people, while also helping make their homes more climate resilient and energy efficient. The World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) supports mission-based businesses around the world benefitting around one million economically marginalized producers, 74% of whom are women- simultaneously protecting the environment.

The cases also show that it is possible to achieve impact at scale by addressing key economic, political and social structural causes of poverty, inequality, gender injustice and environmental harm. Structural change has long been considered a challenge too difficult or radical by mainstream organisations. Yet if successful, such change can stop problems emerging in the first place. The initiatives have helped to: rebalance power to marginalized groups; change government policy; make political decision-making more inclusive; rebalance corporate business models to protect workers and the environment; transform cultural beliefs, social norms and behaviours that perpetuate poverty and injustice; provide green and affordable energy and transport infrastructure; create fairer tax systems; redistribute land; improve the scale, reach and quality of public services; and restore environmental health, on which so many people's livelihoods still depend.

Box 2: Examples of structural solutions to systemic problems

Uganda's government, supported by local civil society, has increased **progressive taxes** on wealthy individuals thereby generating money for poverty-busting social spending and reducing the tax burden on low income people. In Pakistan, one of the most gender unequal countries in the world, the Government has transformed its **budgeting practices** contributing to an increase gender specific spending on health, education and income and increasing school enrolment of girls. Tostan's Community Empowerment Programme has empowered communities to change deep rooted **social norms and behaviours** about female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and early marriage. An estimated 5.5 million people across 8,830 communities in eight African countries have publicly declared their abandonment of these practices. In rural Senegal alone, the incidence of FGM/C has fallen by more than half in participating villages. The Miskito people's long struggle in Honduras, in one of the most violent countries in the world, achieved self-governance and the **restoration of land rights** for 90,000 people.

HOW IMPACT AT SCALE WAS ACHIEVED

All the cases in the series achieved scale in the last 10 years, although many have longer histories. In most cases, impact at scale occurred due to the interaction of intentional strategies of different actors, changing power dynamics between them, and various contextual drivers. Success factors included:

1. A vision of a better world, an unshakeable belief that this is possible and worth fighting for and a dogged commitment to create and scale solutions even against the odds;
2. An integrated approach that simultaneously seeks to reduce poverty, environmental damage and gender injustice;
3. A focus on identifying and addressing structural changes to engender widespread change and prevent or reduce similar problems emerging in the future;
4. A deliberate linking of scale and inclusivity, which involves and supports affected and marginalized groups in creating and scaling solutions;
5. A long-term strategy to create or widen windows of opportunity, with the political judgement and agility to take advantage of them (or external shocks) to scale solutions when they arise;
6. The use of a mix of mutually reinforcing pathways to scale including:
 - The often-overlooked and remarkable power of ordinary women and men in their communities, organisations and workplaces to create, share and spread bottom-up solutions to systemic problems themselves (horizontal scaling);
 - The expansion of solutions by government or other large-scale institutions – either by implementing or supporting solutions via changes to policies, institutional practises, decision-making processes, infrastructures, incentives, accountability and enforcement mechanisms, and/or officials' and public norms and behaviours (vertical scaling);
 - Iteratively testing, adapting and improving strategies to accelerate development and uptake (in-depth scaling).

WHO ACHIEVED IMPACT AT SCALE

Impact at scale was achieved via the (1) mutually reinforcing efforts of or (2) collaborations between, civil society and progressive elements within governments and businesses, and others. The series underlines the importance of developing good quality relationships, recognizing the unique but complementary responsibilities, capacities and contributions of different organizations, and respecting the autonomy and contribution of grassroots and social movements to both scaling and inclusivity. The cases also highlight the important role of community leaders, narratives and action (whether communities of geography, interest, identity, workplace or faith) as they often know what matters to people and what is likely to work.

LOOKING FORWARD

Growing pressure from intensifying crises could catalyse radical change to economic and political systems, resulting in rapid and large-scale change. But there is a real and significant risk that entrenched vested interests will slow or skew change in favour of the wealthy and powerful.

The future direction and speed of change will depend critically on investing in, accelerating and expanding the kind of transformative, inclusive and sustainable solutions offered by these case studies, including via the building of strategic and progressive alliances and collaborations.

Given that one of the key ways that change happens is by people adapting and spreading good ideas and solutions, Oxfam hopes that the series will inspire, inform and catalyse positive change.

INTRODUCTION

The world needs hope.

The converging climate, economic and gender crises are creating profound damage to people's lives and to our beautiful planet. The COVID-19 pandemic is plunging millions of people into poverty, exposing and exacerbating existing injustices and flaws of the dominant economic system (Guterres, 2020).

There are multiplying calls from around the world to 'build back better' from the pandemic. But what evidence is there that a radically better future is possible?

Oxfam's *Inspiring Better Futures* series looks beyond the rallying calls for action to investigate if it is possible to create a more inclusive, kinder and sustainable world, and, if so, how it can be achieved and by whom?

As this synthesis paper demonstrates, the 18 case studies provide hope. Not wishful thinking or empty optimism, but authentic hope based on evidence that radical and transformative change is highly achievable, as well as the belief that a better future is worth fighting for. Together, they show that people are already successfully building better futures, benefiting millions of their fellow citizens, even against the odds in some of the world's toughest and most fragile contexts.

Although the series was conceived before the COVID-19 pandemic upended people's lives, the growing calls for a just and green economic recovery make the insights gained from them more pertinent than ever. They offer compelling examples of the kind of practical yet transformative initiatives that governments can and should undertake or support to genuinely 'build back better'. By helping to reduce poverty, existing inequalities and environmental harm the cases also offer important ways of building resilience to and reducing the impacts of future pandemics (Mukumbang 2020; Kharas and Hamel, 2020; Schalatek, 2020; Settele, et al 2020) or other shocks.

As a key way that change happens is by people spreading and adapting effective solutions. Oxfam hopes that the case studies will inspire, inform and catalyse further change.

CHOOSING HOPE

The combination of powerful forces driving the climate, economic and gender crises and elites exploiting them to further their own interests (Alonso, 2018) can leave people feeling powerless. But there are grounds for hope. First, the sheer scale of these crises offers an unprecedented opportunity to achieve long overdue and urgently needed structural changes to the globally dominant but broken economic system. There is a solid and growing body of evidence showing that the significant economic, social, health and environmental co-benefits of addressing the crises can outweigh the financial costs if early action is taken. (For evidence relating to the climate crisis see: IPCC, 2014; IEA, 2014; Smith et al., 2016; Hepburn et al., 2020; Stern, 2006). Second, there is growing recognition of the structural flaws of the dominant global economic system. Such flaws have long been recognised and critiqued by academics and activists in the global South, for example Walter Rodney and Raul Prebisch, Naila Kabeer, Nawal El, Saadawi, Walden Bello, Martin Khor, Vandana Shiva, Ha-Joon Chang (Ha-Joon Chang, 2010), among others. As the effects of global crises have intensified this recognition is spreading to wealthier OECD countries and establishment institutions (IMF, 2015; Piketty, 2013; Jackson, 2009; Raworth, 2017; Hardoon, 2017; Woodward, 2015; Guterres, 2020). Linked to this, proposals for structural change that were previously considered radical are becoming politically acceptable to

the establishment² with even the *Financial Times* calling for a greatly expanded role for government and a new social contract.³ Third, the pandemic has shown that Governments can intervene decisively and mobilize huge resources when needed. Finally, there is strong pressure for change from civil society ranging from the Black Lives Matter movement, Me Too, youth, climate change activists, gig workers, small farmers to Indigenous peoples and others.

Box 1: A question of hope

The question of hope figures in many philosophical discussions around the world, with most acknowledging that it plays an important role in human motivation and is intrinsically linked with human agency. Indeed, life is nearly impossible without it, as to act we need hope (Bloeser and Stahl, 2017; Han-Pile et al. (2018).

Hope is generally understood to consist of both a desire or longing for something and the belief that it might be possible. Belief in an external God, or in human nature, is an important source of hope for many of the world's major faiths or for secular humanists respectively. Increasingly, science and evidence are also seen as an important, necessary and reliable source for hope. Yet, as important as evidence is, hope may still also require an element of belief: *'an embrace of the unknown and unknowable, an alternative to the certainty of optimists and pessimists ... it's the belief that what we do matters even though how and when it may matter, who and what it may impact, are not things we can know beforehand. We may not, in fact, know them afterward either, but they matter all the same, and history is full of people whose influence was most powerful after they are gone'* (Solnit, 2004). Indeed, action may be needed even when there seems to be no hope.

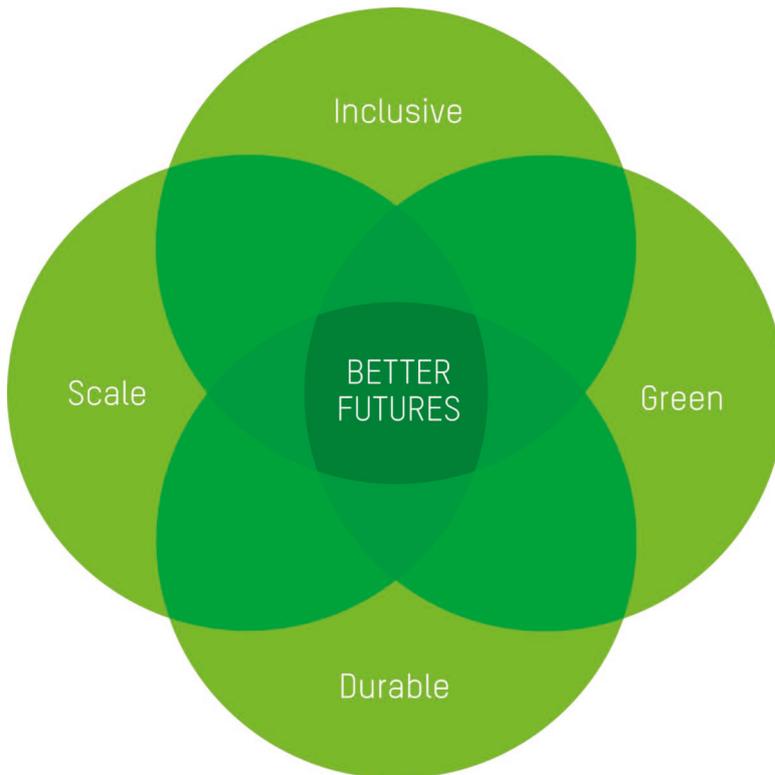
Yet it is undeniably difficult to achieve radical and transformative change at scale that is simultaneously inclusive and sustainable. Large-scale spontaneous change driven by new technologies and market forces, such as technological revolutions, is often neither equitable nor environmentally sustainable. Intentional efforts, for example by governments, which have the greatest powers and levers to achieve scale, are often constrained by ideology, vested interests and lack of resources. Changes driven by civil society, while often more inclusive can struggle to achieve scale. Even when it does – for example, when protest overturns a repressive government – it can then find it difficult to influence the subsequent direction of change (Castells, 2014).

THE INSPIRING BETTER FUTURES SERIES

The Inspiring Better Future series asks: 'What evidence exists that radical, transformative and inclusive change at scale is possible in challenging, lower-income contexts and what insights can we gain about how to achieve it?' This question triggered a search for meso-level cases (i.e. between micro and macro-level change⁴) that could shed light on three specific questions:

- Is impact at scale possible in challenging, lower-income contexts? If so, what scale and type of impacts can be achieved and how inclusive are they?
- Is structural change possible? If so, what type and mix of structural changes are needed to achieve impact at scale and how durable is the change?
- How can impact at scale be achieved? What timescales are involved, and what contextual drivers, scaling pathways, change strategies and actors are involved?

Figure 1. Better futures at the intersection



The selection criteria for the series required cases to: (a) be located in a lower-income and challenging context; (b) show demonstrable, documented and reliable evidence of achieving impact at scale at meso level; (c) have occurred in the last 10 years (though perhaps with a longer back story); and (d) tackle underlying structural causes of poverty or injustice, rather than ameliorating symptoms. The criteria set the cases apart from more familiar country-level studies,⁵ project-level cases (e.g. Honig, 2020), randomized controls trials of specific policies (Banerjee and Duflo, 2011) or studies in OECD countries (e.g. Rapid Transition Alliance).⁶

Additionally, case studies had to relate to one of the three systemic crises of our time:

- **The crisis of extreme inequality**, which is characterized by the spread of economic insecurity and poverty-level wages alongside obscene wealth; slows poverty reduction and is associated with growing social problems; exacerbates the climate crisis; reduces the provision of important public goods; damages trust; and is associated with economic instability, financial crisis and corruption (IMF, 2015; OECD, 2014; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010; Chancel and Piketty, 2015; Gore, 2020).
- **The crisis of gender injustice**, which intersects with class and racial injustices to deny women and others their fundamental rights, perpetuates discrimination and violence against them and undervalues their caring roles (UN Women, 2019; WEF, 2020; Coffey et al, 2020; Guterres, 2020; Channon and Ngulube, 2015).
- **The climate and environmental crisis**, which has heralded a global climate emergency with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable or marginalized groups, growing conflicts over water, accelerated deforestation contributing to health pandemics, a dramatic downturn in biodiversity and breaching of other planetary boundaries, putting all of humanity at peril (Rockström et al., 2009; IPCC, 2018; IPBES, 2019; Gore, 2020).

Box 2: Definitions used in this paper

Impact at scale: change that affects tens of thousands of people or hundreds of communities.

Transformative change: change that has generated major economic, social, health or environmental benefits for people's lives or for wider society by changing its fundamental nature.

Structural causes or drivers of poverty or injustice: deep-rooted, stable and enduring elements of a system that contribute to poverty, injustice or other systemic problems and that, if addressed, can reduce or prevent problems from emerging in the first place

Systemic crisis: a set of problems with far-reaching effects caused by key inherent elements of a system (see below).

A system: an interconnected set of elements or structures coherently organized to achieve something i.e. is more than the sum of its parts (Meadows, 1999). It can refer to any system or sub-system, whether economic, political, social or physical. This paper often uses the term to refer to the dominant global neoliberal economic, political and socio-technical system.

Many promising cases were discarded due to insufficient detail in documentation or because they failed to simultaneously meet all the selection criteria for the series. From a longlist of around 78 cases, 18 were selected which best fulfilled the criteria and also represented a mix of different themes: five related to economic inequality, seven to gender injustices and six to environmental crises (see Annex 1 for the selected cases). There is no doubt that many more inspiring initiatives exist that are not represented here.

The cases were identified and shortlisted via an internal and external 'call for cases', plus an active search based on pre-identified selection criteria (see Annex 2 for methodology). Oxfam staff were consulted upstream on purpose, research method and possible uses and country staff. Partners have been involved in their selection and production. The selected case studies were researched and written by independent researchers, in some cases co-authored with partners or staff, and independently peer reviewed. The synthesis paper was shared with everyone involved in producing or reviewing the case studies for comment and input, including case study contacts, reviewers, partners and staff.

ABOUT THIS PAPER

Section 2 draws out insights about **what** kind of change was achieved, in relation to the types of impact, inclusivity of impacts, structural change and durability identified in the case studies. Section 3 assesses **how** change happened, including timescales, contextual factors and scaling pathways and strategies. Section 4 highlights insights about **who** achieved impact at scale. Section 5 sets out some **conclusions** about an evidence base for hope.

WHAT IMPACT WAS ACHIEVED

This section assesses the location, scale and types of impact generated by the case studies, their inclusivity, the type and mix of structural changes and their likely durability.

BACKGROUND

In recent decades the world has experienced significant reductions in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2018), as well as improvements in life expectancy, health, and education (UNDP, 2019). However, the definition of poverty is narrowly based on income and the bar is set very low at \$1.90 per day. Both absolute and relative income-based poverty, and non-income forms of poverty, persist across the world (UNDP, 2019). Today's converging crises are threatening to plunge millions more people into poverty, exacerbate existing inequalities and destroy the environment on which human health depends.

Some of the structural drivers of persistent poverty, injustice and the converging crises are now understood to include the economic system's failure to adequately value nature or care work (often carried out by women and essential workers), its relentless drive for economic growth and ever increasing consumption beyond the environmental carrying capacity of the Earth, and the generation of extreme inequality. This understanding is matched by growing calls for structural solutions, including revising gross domestic product (GDP) accounts so they value well-being, nature and unpaid care work; protecting public goods and the commons from the market; introducing wealth taxes; massively increasing public investment in green infrastructure; and reforming company law and practice (Jackson, 2009; Raworth, 2017; Hardoon, 2017; Newell, 2012).

This section draws out insights from the case studies about: (1) whether radical change at scale is possible in challenging, lower-income countries, (2) what scale and type of impact is possible, to what extent is it transformative, inclusive and environmentally sustainable and what trade-offs or challenges were encountered and (3) what type and mix of structural changes helped achieved these impacts and (4) how durable they are.

IMPACT IN FRAGILE AND TOUGH CONTEXTS

The impacts of systemic crises tend to be felt more intensely in lower-income countries where people are more vulnerable and there are fewer resources to respond (IPCC, 2018). Countries with weak or fragile governments, conflict, restricted political space and extreme inequalities or injustices may also find it harder to mitigate or adapt to crises. Is radical impact at scale possible in such contexts? If change is possible in the world's most intractable contexts, then it must surely be possible elsewhere, setting a powerful precedent and a challenge to the rest of the world?

The case studies selected for the *Inspiring Better Futures* series are located in countries that met one or more of the following criteria:⁷

- **Income:** most of the cases studies are located in low- or lower-middle-income countries; only three are middle-income, based on World Bank national poverty rates (World Bank, 2020).

- **Human development:** many of the countries have low levels of human development. Rwanda, Ethiopia, Zambia, Ghana, Uganda and Pakistan all rank in the bottom quarter of countries in UNDP's Human Development Report (UNDP, 2019).⁸
- **Economic inequality:** Brazil, South Africa, Zambia and Colombia all have extreme levels of economic inequality, as measured by the Palma ratio and based on the World Income Inequality Database (UNU-WIDER, 2019).
- **Gender injustice:** India, Pakistan and Ghana have low or very poor global rankings for gender injustice, based on the Global Gender Gap Index (WEF, 2020).
- **Political freedoms:** Bangladesh, Rwanda, India, Colombia, Uganda, Pakistan, Honduras, Ethiopia and Cuba are considered to have either restricted or closed civic space, based on the CIVICUS Monitor.⁹
- **Fragility:** Bangladesh, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Zambia, Uganda and Pakistan are categorized as 'fragile' or conflict-affected contexts by the Fragile States Index (Fund for Peace, 2019).
- **Vulnerability to the climate crisis:** Bangladesh, India, Cuba, Pakistan, Colombia, Honduras and Vietnam are considered to be highly vulnerable to climate risks, as assessed by the Global Climate Risk Index (Eckstein et al., 2020).
- **Ecological Fragility:** Countries like Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Uganda face four or more ecological threats (Ecological Threat Register, 2020).

IMPACT AT SCALE: BENEFITING MILLIONS

Given the size and number of problems humanity faces, a holy grail for poverty or environmentally focused organizations has been 'to get to scale' and to do so quickly. There is much research and discussion about whether and under what conditions scaling up is desirable, its risks and trade-offs and how to achieve it (e.g. UNDP, 2013; Davies and Simon, 2013; Cordova, 2019). But there can be little doubt that achieving positive impact at scale is an increasingly urgent challenge, given the vast and growing threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate, inequality and gender crises, which are pushing millions of people back into poverty.

Together, the cases reached and benefited the lives of millions of people in some of the world's most challenging contexts. Individually, the case studies have benefited thousands, or tens of thousands, of people across different communities and localities, whether in a certain city or region, at a regional level or at national or international level. Box 4 gives a sense of the scale achieved by the cases. As few cases measured indirect, long-term or ripple benefits, these impacts may well be underestimated (see Annex 2 for data quality).

Box 3: Case study scale and context – some examples

Climate and environmental and resource degradation

- The spread of agroecology in West Africa, one of the most environmentally fragile zones on the planet, is estimated to have improved food security for an **estimated three million people**, increased farmers' incomes and helped reverse desertification ('Regreening the Sahel'). In Cuba, **over 200,000 families** have joined the Campesino a Campesino (CAC, or Farmer to Farmer) movement, with many more adopting agroecological practices, and have benefited from increased productivity and higher incomes, more secure access to nutritious food and resilience to impacts of the climate crisis, among other improvements.
- The Brazilian government's **Bolsa Verde** social protection scheme reached **74,522 people** living in extreme poverty in remote areas of the Amazon while simultaneously **reducing deforestation in those area by over 40%**.
- Water consumption in the city of Cape Town was reduced by 50%, safeguarding water access for **4.6 million people**, 39% of whom live in poverty
- The Beyond the Grid Fund for Zambia (BGFZ) provided **875,810 people**, a quarter of them in female-headed households, with access to clean energy and associated health and economic benefits.

Gender injustice

- **An estimated 5.5 million people from 8,830 communities** in eight countries in Africa have declared that they have abandoned the practices of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and early marriage. They include 5,315 communities in rural Senegal, where the prevalence of FGM/C has fallen by more than half in participating villages.
- In Pakistan, initiatives to strengthen women's leadership and political participation have benefited over **187,000 women**.
- In India, the Mahila Housing SEWA Trust (MHT) has improved security of tenure and access to water and sanitation for around **1.8 million women** in 1,081 informal urban settlements across 36 cities.

Economic inequality

- Uganda is a low-income, heavily indebted country and one of the poorest in the world, yet the government, with pressure and support from civil society, **has increased taxes on high net worth individuals (HWNIs)**, thereby reducing the tax burden on people living in poverty. As a result, it **increased nominal expenditure on agriculture, public services and social protection by more than one-third between 2015/6 and 2018/19**.
- The World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) works with and benefits around **965,700 economically marginalized** producers, over 95% of whom live in low-income countries and 74% of whom are women. The wider Fair Trade movement represents over **2.5 million producers and workers in over 70 countries**.
- The struggle of the Miskito Indigenous people in Honduras, one of the most violent countries in the world, finally resulted in the restoration of their land rights and self-governance, enabling **90,000 Miskitos** to secure land titles.

TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT: MULTIPLE BENEFITS

Many people still equate poverty simply with income. However, it has long been acknowledged that poverty encompasses multiple aspects of life and not only disposable income – such as strengthened voice, security and freedom from violence and access to services and natural resources. These wider aspects underpin the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)’s Human Development Index (HDI), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Oxfam’s own understanding of poverty. Understanding the type and mix of impacts or benefits that can be achieved at scale can help consolidate a multi-dimensional appreciation of poverty reduction.

Cross-analysis of the cases shows that **collectively they generated around 40 different types of poverty reduction and environmental benefit:**

- Fifteen of the eighteen cases generated three or more different types of poverty or environmental-related impacts. Six cases generated three, two cases (Cuba agroecology and Pamir Energy) generated seven and one (MHT) generated eight different types of benefit (BGFZ). (See Table 1 and Annex 1).

Table 1: Categories and types of benefit and impact

Category/type of benefit	Type of benefit or impact identified in the case studies
<i>Voice, influence and governance</i>	Strengthened individual voice (agency); strengthened leadership; strengthened collective capacity of marginalized groups; increased participation in and influence over decision making/more inclusive governance; strengthened accountability and responsiveness of government; self-governance.
<i>Gender justice</i>	As above plus; reduction in gender-based violence (GBV)/freedom from abuse/security (including FMG/C); reduced incidence of child marriage; increased role of men in care work; greater equality in household decision making.
<i>Access to and quality of services</i>	Increased tax revenues and spending on health and education; reduced tax burden on low-income groups/increased burden on wealthy groups; increased access to and quality of water, sanitation and related services; improved access to and quality of health services and education.
<i>Homes</i>	Increased security of home ownership; increased quality of services to homes (as a productive asset).
<i>Natural environment and resources</i>	Increased security of land tenure/more secure access to land; greater food sufficiency/security; greater access to nutritious food; more secure access to natural resources; increased agricultural productivity (and hence income); restoration and protection of soil and water.
<i>Climate and environmental crisis</i>	Strengthened resilience/adaptive capacity to climatic impacts; reduced carbon emissions; improved air quality; reduced deforestation.
<i>Energy poverty</i>	Reduced energy poverty; economic, health and other co-benefits from access to energy; reduced time spent by women collecting firewood; strengthened energy security.
<i>Access to and quality of transport</i>	Reduced spatial isolation via increased access to affordable, green transport; increased social inclusion; increased access to employment opportunities.

<i>Work and livelihoods</i>	Increased access to fair and dignified work/economic empowerment; higher wages; improved working conditions; increased job/livelihood security; reduced working hours; improved social security.
<i>Income</i>	Increased and more secure income.
<i>Conflict</i>	Reduced conflict.
<i>Injustice</i>	Righting of historic injustices.

Notes for Table: (a) The classification of impacts (and outcomes) may vary depending on the theory of action underpinning the case. In some cases, impacts were classified as outcomes and outcomes classified as final impacts. For example, strengthened voice, changed behaviours or improved access to services could be considered either a final impact or outcome (b) The quality and reliability of impact data varies between cases. See methodology note in Annex 2.

Twelve of the eighteen cases generated benefits that helped to mitigate two or more systemic crises simultaneously. Four cases (MHT, WFTO, ACCRA, Cuba agroecology) simultaneously addressed all three systemic challenges (see examples in table 2) and eight simultaneously addressed two. Of the six gender injustice cases four also addressed economic inequality and one the climate crisis. Five of the seven climate justice cases also addressed economic inequality, and three tackled gender injustice. Of the six economic inequality cases, one also addressed gender injustice and two tackled the environmental crisis. However, overall six of the cases generated benefits relating to only one of the crises, and three of these were economic inequality cases. It would be useful to explore to what extent more conscious design of the initiatives might have enabled these cases to simultaneously address other crises.

Table 2: Examples of cases simultaneously addressing three crises

Types of impacts/benefits				
Structural changes	Climate crisis – impacts/benefit	Extreme economic inequality – impacts/benefit	Gender injustice – impacts/benefits	Total number of benefits
<i>Gender injustice</i>				
MHT, India – empowering and improving housing and services to women living in informal urban settlements Changes in power relations between women and service providers. More responsive local political decision making by service providers. Improvements in quality and reach of service delivery. Access to finance. Improved skills for women. Changes in cultural beliefs/attitudes.	Strengthened resilience to the climate crisis. Reduced carbon emissions.	Strengthened voice and participation in local decision making. Increased security of home tenure and ownership. Improved access to housing and basic services such as clean water and sanitation. Improved livelihoods and incomes.	Recipients are all low-income women living in informal urban settlements.	N=6

<i>Economic inequality</i>				
<p>Fair value – building and spreading new business models (WFTO)</p> <p>Company business models and practices.</p> <p>Power and gender relations in production, trade and markets.</p>	<p>Mitigation of negative environmental impacts.</p>	<p>Strengthened voice (ownership and control over livelihoods).</p> <p>Fair and dignified work.</p> <p>Increased incomes.</p> <p>Strengthened social security (maternity leave, healthcare and pension).</p>	<p>74% of WFTO members are women.</p>	<p>N=5</p>
<i>Climate and Environmental crisis</i>				
<p>Agroecological revolution in Cuba</p> <p>Spread of innovative and sustainable farming practices and behaviours.</p> <p>Strengthened collective organization and voice for farmers.</p> <p>Restoration of soil and water.</p> <p>Strengthened knowledge and skills of farmers.</p> <p>Some changes to government policies and practices.</p>	<p>Increased resilience to climate risk.</p> <p>Reduced carbon emissions.</p> <p>Reduced reliance on oil-based inputs</p>	<p>Increased productivity and inferred increases in income.</p> <p>Increased food self-sufficiency and access to more nutritious food.</p> <p>Increased resilience to climate risk.</p> <p>More secure access to resources.</p> <p>Increased social cohesion and rural inclusion.</p> <p>Strengthened collective voice and organization.</p>	<p>Reduction in some aspects of gender injustice.</p> <p>40% of senior coordinators of the CAC movement are women.</p> <p>Diversifying roles and income-earning opportunities for women, youth and older people, including women taking charge of management and income from animals, vermiculture, medicinal plants.</p>	<p>N=7</p>

The cases generated both conventional and unconventional poverty-reduction or sustainable development benefits. Most of the benefits or impacts relate to existing internationally agreed poverty indicators, including many of the SDGs and indicators of the HDI. For example, ‘increased income’, the indicator most frequently used to define and measure poverty, featured in at least 10 cases (although caution is needed, as some cases might omit income as a benefit due to the difficulties of measurement and attribution, or because it will only materialize as a future benefit e.g. from girls’ education). More secure livelihoods or jobs, another conventional indicator, also featured in several case studies.

Other less mainstream indicators included, among others, dignified and decent work, strengthened voice and participation in decision making; valuing and recognizing the roles of women domestic workers; women’s care work; reducing gender-based violence/freedom from abuse such as female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C); and environmental health.

Strengthened civil society voice featured strongly as a benefit in many, but not in all, cases and was associated with greater inclusivity. Many micro case studies¹⁰ see civil society strengthening as an end itself. In this set of cases, civil society involvement or strengthening was not one of the selection criteria. Yet, civil society ‘voice’ – whether relating to individual agency, decision making at home or collective capacity at work, or in political decision making or self-governance (in the case of the Miskito people) – emerged as a valued impact in half the cases. It was less prominent in cases involving government or private sector provision of infrastructure (six out of nine cases) but featured strongly in cases with tactical collaboration between civil society and government, such as MHT in India and the Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance (ACCRA) in East Africa.

The case study initiatives also generated benefits that are not reflected in conventional poverty or sustainable development indicators. Although the SDGs encompass a very extensive list of indicators, the cases mentioned additional benefits. In Honduras, the correction of historical injustices by restoring land rights and self-governance to indigenous people who had been dispossessed of their land in the colonial period featured as an important impact in its own right, regardless of how much it contributed to improved livelihoods and income. Reduced ‘spatial stigmatization’ of informal settlement residents was as an important benefit in the Medellín cable car case in Colombia.

INCLUSIVE IMPACT: REDUCING POVERTY

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has emphasized that scaling up is a process that should ensure the quality of a development impact and reach those ‘left behind’, while ensuring the sustainability and adaptability of results (UNDP, 2013: 7). Yet, one risk of seeking to benefit large numbers of people is reduced inclusivity or empowerment. An initiative may generate health, economic and environmental benefits but, without care, these benefits can easily accrue mainly to better-off people rather than those living in poverty, exacerbating existing inequalities. Similarly, ‘scaling up’ may transfer power and control away from people or communities who created the initial change. If change is seen as unfair, it can generate resistance and backlash, thus constraining further scaling.¹¹ So we wanted to understand to what extent it is possible to achieve positive change at scale that is also inclusive and fair.

Collecting intersectional disaggregated data on impacts is important to help ensure inclusivity, but it is a costly exercise and is rarely undertaken. Not surprisingly, few of the case studies had a full intersectional breakdown of the demographics of people benefiting. This limits the precision with which inclusive impact can be known. Furthermore, indirect, ripple or future benefits (e.g. from increased education for girls) are rarely included in the impact count. Nevertheless, most cases had enough data and documentation to assess their likely inclusivity.

The cases revealed **the important role of civil society in helping to achieve inclusive impact**, although not a selection criterion. One of the surest ways in which the cases achieved inclusive outcomes was by **involving marginalized groups upstream in governance** (10 cases). In some cases, communities created their own local committees or councils – for example, the Miskito councils in Honduras or Farmer to Farmer movement (MACAC) in Cuba. In other cases, committees or groups were established, with support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – for example, MHT setting up women’s groups in informal urban settlements of India, Aurat Foundation establishing Women’s Leader Groups in Pakistan, or the involvement of domestic workers in workers’ alliances in Bangladesh. In some cases, affected groups were provided with training and resources, such as the community committees in the case of Tostan in Senegal and other African countries. In the case of Regreening the Sahel, change was driven to a large extent by farmers themselves, with some help from intermediary bodies.

In other cases, **implementing organizations consulted or engaged marginalized groups** on the design or implementation of the initiative (five cases). For example, national governments engaged local people in gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in Pakistan and in climate resilience projects in East Africa (ACCRA) and local government engaged communities in participatory budget planning in Colombia (Medellín Metrocable).

Two cases did not appear to directly involve people in governance or have formal consultation mechanisms but did **geographically target and design their strategies to benefit people living in poverty or in low-income areas**. To be eligible for the Brazilian government’s Bolsa Verde social protection scheme, recipients had to be living in extreme poverty, as defined by

income, in the Legal Amazon region. The Beyond the Grid Fund for Zambia (BGFZ) targeted customers in rural or semi-rural areas and female-headed households, using accessible funding packages.

Inclusive benefits were not automatic but required intentional design. The municipality of Cape Town in South Africa halved the city's water use in three years, protecting millions of people from water shortages, but in the process neglected to involve low-income women or communities in design, which reportedly exacerbated existing water inequalities, possibly also contributing to non-compliance. In Zambia, the BGFZ enabled access to clean energy and co-benefits for an impressive 875,810 people in rural areas, with a quarter being headed by women, but the companies have yet to reach the poorest communities in rural areas. In Vietnam, Unilever increased wages and thus security for its direct employees, but a lack of oversight meant that the jobs brought in-house in its factory benefited only male workers. Solutions might involve Unilever recognizing trade unions or the BGFZ tendering contracts to mission-led companies or cooperatives.

Together, the case studies highlight the importance of equitable design and involving affected groups in design and delivery to ensure inclusivity, to support people's empowerment, and to gain public support for systemic change.

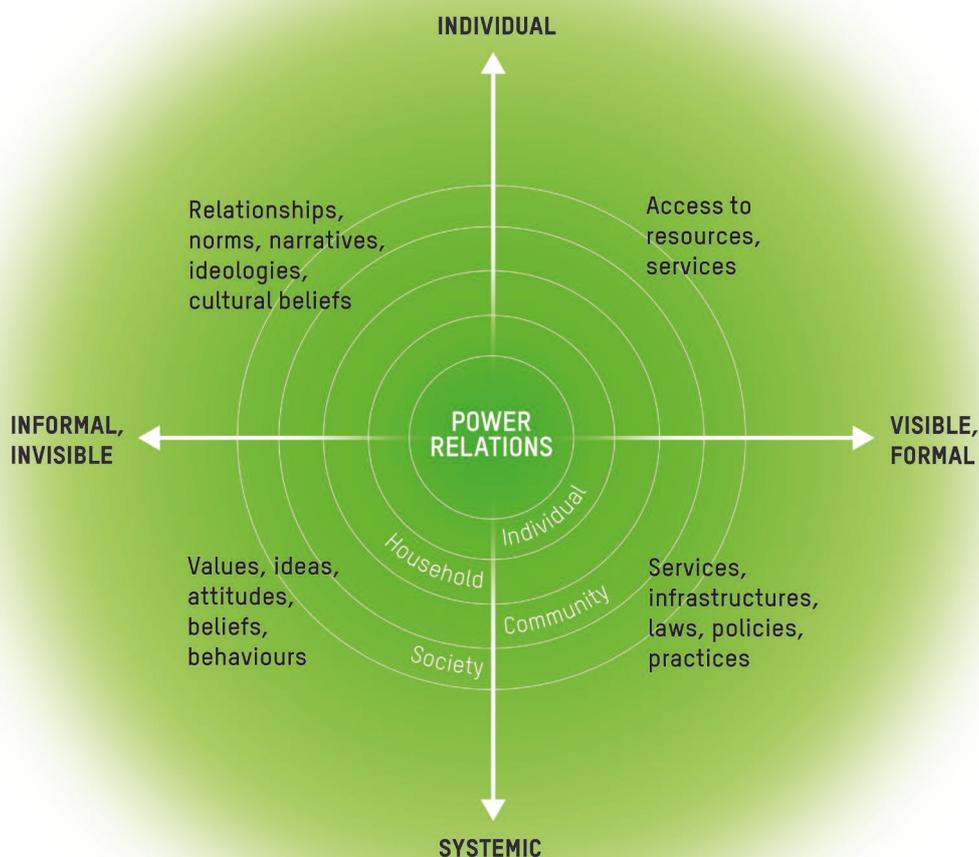
RADICAL IMPACT: STRUCTURAL SOLUTIONS TO SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS

As noted above, there is a growing recognition of the need to address the underlying structural causes of systemic crises to prevent problems arising in the first place, rather than only ameliorating their symptoms or undertaking incremental reforms, important though these also are.

However, structural change to the dominant economic system is difficult, does not necessarily lead to transformative or inclusive change, and may generate unintended consequences. So one line of inquiry was to see if structural change is possible in ways that contribute to transformative impact at scale, and if so, what type and mix of structural changes were needed to achieve this.

Structural factors are stable and enduring factors that reinforce the current system (Grin et al., 2011). They may be political, economic or cultural; visible (laws, practices, behaviours, socio-economic status), invisible (cultural beliefs, social norms) or hidden (informal interest groups operating behind the scenes); and may either contribute to, or help prevent poverty, injustice and wider systemic crises. They are also sometimes known as the dominant 'rules of the game' (Menocal et al., 2018) or the 'regime' (Geels and Schot, 2007). They are similar, although not identical to, system leverage points i.e. acupuncture points in a complex system where a shift in one system element can produce big changes in other parts (Meadows, 1999) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Systemic change, adapted from Rao and Kelleher, 2005



Collectively, the cases show that structural change can offer a powerful and achievable route to achieving transformative impact at scale. In all the cases, initiatives successfully changed two or more structural features of the dominant system and all generated positive benefits at scale, as noted above (see Box 3). Transformative change was more likely when:

- **More than one structural factor was addressed.** All cases tackled at least two or more structural factors. One case (MHT) addressed six structural factors and that of agroecology in Cuba tackled five. Six cases tackled three structural changes.
- **Visible and invisible structural factors were addressed.** For example, MenCare in Rwanda and Tostan in West Africa challenged invisible social norms about men's caring roles and FGM/C respectively, while changing visible structures such as laws, policies, practices and behaviours (see Box 5). In the case of Regreening the Sahel, the spread of new practices contributed to more supportive government policy.

Some structural changes generated a larger number of benefits than others.¹² Mission-led businesses (WFTO) and the provision of green and affordable transport infrastructure (Medellin Metrocable) generated multiple different benefits (five different types each), by addressing only two structural factors. The fact that both cases were also inclusive suggests that they offer important pathways for achieving transformative and inclusive change at scale.

The multiple co-benefits generated by green and affordable energy provision are well known (Hepburn, 2020). BGFZ in Zambia (BGFZ) and Pamir Energy in Afghanistan and Tajikistan

generated eight and seven different types of benefits respectively, by making three structural changes each. Both were relatively inclusive but more involvement of civil society, local government or mission-led businesses in the design and delivery could further increase inclusivity.

In contrast, the Farmer-to-Farmer agroecology movement in Cuba and MHT in India also generated many benefits (seven and five respectively) but did so by addressing a larger number of structural factors. The fact that the initiatives in these two cases were highly inclusive suggests that there may be significant value in addressing a wider range of structural factors, particularly strengthening civil society voice.

Box 4: Examples of structural changes achieved by case study initiatives

- **Power and gender relations:** strengthened (individual and collective) voice, capacity or rights of marginalized groups, such as domestic women workers in Bangladesh or women in the informal sector in India or;
- **Ideologies,¹³ cultural beliefs and/or social norms:** changes in men's beliefs and norms concerning domestic care in Rwanda (Promundo), or increased understanding of women's rights and FGM/C in Senegal (Tostan);
- **Behaviours:** reduced water consumption in Cape Town, or HNWI in Uganda paying more tax;
- **Know-how and skills:** MHT's work in low income urban settlements of India to train women construction workers, sharing farmer-to-farmer know-how as part of the agroecology movement in Cuba, capacity building of domestic workers in Bangladesh, or training of women leaders in Pakistan;
- **Political space and decision-making:** creating women's leadership groups in Pakistan, strengthening inclusive and gender-responsive government practices in Ethiopia or the establishing self-governance in Honduras, which was often linked to efforts to strengthen voice;
- **Government legislation, policies and practices:** a minimum wage in Vietnam, protection of domestic workers in Bangladesh, increased taxation of HNWI in Uganda, increases in gender-specific government expenditure (e.g. on girls' schooling in Bangladesh);
- **Corporate policies and practices (business models):** the spread of mission-led business models (WFTO), Unilever's commitment to a living wage;
- **Socio-technical innovations:** the spread of environmentally friendly, low-carbon and low-input farming innovations in Cuba and the Sahel; the introduction of an Android App to enhance gender-sensitive and local monitoring of government education budgets in Bangladesh;
- **Water, health or education services:** the collaboration between local women, MHT and local government which improved the quality and reach of water and sanitation services to women in informal urban settlements in India; and the GRB initiative in Bangladesh contributed to increased spending on girls' education;
- **Infrastructure:** the clean and inclusive cable car transport scheme in Medellín; energy schemes in Tajikistan/Afghanistan and Zambia.
- **New technology:** the availability of pay-as-you-go solar home systems (previously only used for mobile phones) in Zambia; a mobile app to enable local monitoring of government education budgets in Pakistan;
- **Environmental health:** the Brazilian government's Bolsa Verde social protection scheme, which provided a safety net for Amazon dwellers and incentivized protection of the forest;
- **Market forces:** social procurement fund and regulation to incentivise and reduce barriers to the provision of clean energy to lower-income for remote communities in Zambia, Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

DURABLE IMPACT: IN FOR THE LONG HAUL

A rarely questioned common assumption of civil society development efforts is that eradicating key structural causes of poverty and injustice will be transformative and lasting. But to what extent is this true?

Evidence from the case studies on the durability of change is sketchy. Many of the gains described are relatively recent, given the selection criterion. However, many of the cases had already seen sustained change over several years. Such sustained spread is heartening; MenCare and Tostan are examples of initiatives that continue to spread horizontally rather than reaching a plateau.

One hypothesis that needs more exploration is that the greater the number of structural causes that have been tackled, the more durable or lasting the impact.

As systemic crises continue to unfold and external pressures intensify, the relevance and benefits of these cases should become more apparent, possibly accelerating further uptake, spread and scaling. A good example of this is the spread of agroecology (MACAC in Cuba), which enables sustainable farming and the use of renewable energy without relying on fossil fuels or breaching other planetary boundaries.

External shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic are a strong test of durability. Many of the case study initiatives could help to prevent or build preparedness and resilience against future health or economic shocks by reducing the systemic inequalities that contribute to their spread such as low wages, GBV, food insecurity, overcrowded housing, lack of education, poor health and deforestation. The case study from Uganda demonstrates how tax revenues can be increased, important for governments seeking finance a just and green recovery. The establishment of community-based organization, as described in some cases, can help with awareness-raising, mutual support and channel food and resources to people affected by pandemics.

On the other hand, in some cases health shocks like COVID-19 may weaken or reverse structural changes. For example, people are currently using public transport less due to the risks involved, at least in the short term (Medellín Metrocable). Similarly, cases involving businesses (such as the WFTO, Unilever, Pamir Energy and the BGFZ in Zambia) may suffer reduced demand for goods, or governments may see a drop in tax revenues for public services, due to the pandemic-triggered economic recession.

More generally, government initiatives are sometimes considered to be more politically volatile than those led by the private sector, as they depend on the electoral cycle. It is certainly true that one case, the Bolsa Verde government programme in Brazil was axed by a subsequent government, symbolic of many such cases worldwide. However, other government initiatives, such as gender-responsive budgeting in Pakistan and ACCRA in East Africa or delivering new infrastructure (Pamir Energy, BGFZ, Medellín Metrocable), which involve mainstreaming and embedding new institutional practices or physical infrastructure, are more difficult to reverse or dismantle.

The case studies do not suggest that market-based or private sector solutions will necessarily deliver more sustained impact than non-private sector cases. Two of the cases involving private companies – Pamir Energy and BGFZ – require continued donor or government subsidies until – and if – costs fall sufficiently, for example, due to increased economies of scale, efficiencies, market learning or competition. This also makes them vulnerable to political changes in both the implementing and the donor country. Even a huge and powerful company like Unilever has said that it would welcome supportive ‘smart’ government regulation to prevent companies from undercutting socially responsible practices.

HOW RADICAL IMPACT AT SCALE WAS ACHIEVED

The case studies help cast light and validate **what** needs to change in order to achieve radical, transformative, inclusive and sustainable change at scale. But what do they reveal about **how** to achieve rapid impact at scale in a way which prevents the converging systemic crises from plunging millions more people into poverty and creating irreversible environmental damage? This section assesses to what extent change was intentional or spontaneous, what external factors enabled or constrained change, and what scaling pathways and change strategies were involved.

BACKGROUND

History and political science show that large scale systemic change can and does happen. Think of the industrial, information and digital revolutions and the profound accompanying social changes they have prompted. However, such transitions are often driven by powerful disruptive new technologies, shifting geo-politics, market forces or crises that are beyond the control of individual organizations (Guijt and Artuso, 2020). They are not always equitable and rarely environmentally sustainable.

Yet history also shows that intentional, transformative and inclusive systemic change at scale is also possible, when achieved by progressive alliances of affected people, civil society organizations (CSOs) and establishment allies. Such examples include the abolition of slavery, the end of colonial rule, the expansion of electoral franchises for billions of women and men and the creation of international and regional institutions to protect human rights, indigenous peoples and the natural environment (e.g. see Newell and Simms, 2020).

Different perspectives exist on how systemic change happens (Krznaric 2007; Green 2016). Some highlight the role of sudden external factors, such as shocks and crises, creating 'critical junctures' (Capoccia, 2016) that make decisions by important actors suddenly more influential in determining future pathways. Another perspective¹⁴ argues that system change happens gradually over time and is driven mainly by interacting internal factors, such as the change strategies of different change agents and the power dynamics between them (Capoccia, 2016). Another perspective¹⁵ suggests that sudden radical change happens due to the build-up of unresolved system pressures (Baumgartner et al., 2009). System change may also happen due to interactions between different system levels. For example, long-term trends such as the climate crisis (at the landscape level) can exert pressure on and disrupt dominant policies, norms and practices (at the regime level), which in turn can open the door for 'niche' or grass roots innovations (on the margins of society) to spread to the mainstream (Geels and Schot, 2007; Smith and Seyfang, 2013).

Despite the current challenging context and multiple structural constraints, the initiatives examined in these case studies have achieved remarkable success. What can be learned about *how* they have done this?

INTENTIONAL OR SPONTANEOUS CHANGE

Nearly all 18 cases involve intentional rather than spontaneous impact at scale, although some elements of their scaling processes occurred spontaneously. Only the spread of environmentally friendly practices between farmers in the Sahel was mainly spontaneous, although this also received some external assistance from NGOs. As intentional change was not specified in the selection criteria for the cases, this suggests either that spontaneous cases of radical change at scale are not well documented or that fewer cases of spontaneous change exist that meet all the eligibility criteria of transformative and inclusive change at scale. This is not necessarily surprising, as markets and technological forces left to their own devices have contributed to highly unequal and unsustainable impacts.

The lack of spontaneous processes of change might also suggest that the interaction of external pressures and 'niche' innovations have not yet reached sufficient intensity to catalyse radical changes to the dominant 'rules of the game'. But if systemic crises intensify and external shocks multiply in the coming years, the dominant rules of the game might change spontaneously, suddenly and radically, opening the door to the accelerated spread of innovations. Even if this happens, intentional strategies by change agents will remain essential to shape solutions to ensure they reduce rather than exacerbate poverty, inequality and environmental damage.

TIMESCALES

The urgency of addressing existing systemic crises focused the search on cases that had achieved rapid and radical change at scale and in the past 10 or so years, even if they had a longer history. **In terms of timescales all the cases achieved scale in the past 10 years or less**, demonstrating that rapid change is possible. The case of Cape Town, for example, where the city succeeded in halving its water use in an impressive three years, highlights the power of government and public action to protect the environment when faced with an emergency.

However, many cases had a longer history behind them. For example, advances in women's political participation in Pakistan came after decades of struggle and the interaction of multiple domestic and international actors and factors over time. An extreme example is the struggle of the Miskito people in Honduras for the restoration of land rights and self-governance, issues that had not been resolved for hundreds of years.

CONTEXTUAL DRIVERS AND CONSTRAINTS

So, what do the case studies reveal about the different drivers and dynamics of change?

Most cases achieved structural changes due to the interaction of intentional change strategies of different actors (endogenous factors) and long-term external trends or pressures (17 out of 18 cases) (see Box 5). For example, external pressures from soil degradation and a trade embargo facilitated the spread of more sustainable agroecological farming practices in the Sahel and Cuba respectively. The growing urgency for economies to shift away from fossil fuels and prevent further breaches of planetary boundaries may well catalyse the further scaling-up of clean energy solutions (as in the BGFZ in Zambia) and environmentally sustainable farming methods such as agroecology among resource-poor farmers.

Box 5: How contextual factors and change strategies interact to create change at scale

In the GRB case in Pakistan, campaigners built on several factors: the gains of previous long struggles by women's groups to raise awareness of women's rights and influence government; the evolution of international conventions on women's rights; the actions of establishment allies in the Ministry of Women's Development; and opportunities offered by an IMF loan enabling the mainstreaming of GRB across government, supported by capacity building of government officials and support and pressure from donors.

Brazil's Bolsa Verde programme evolved from a mix of landscape pressures due to the climate crisis and deforestation; new international and national understandings of environmental problems and solutions; a new government and a wider political shift to reduce poverty; existing institutional capacity and experience; and an opportunity to build on existing institutional programme policy.

Scaling was driven *predominantly* by intentional strategies alone in just two cases. These cases include the decision by the small farmers association (ANAP) in Cuba to free itself from reliance on project-based donor funding which enabled more rapid scaling. Plus, new leadership and a change of strategy by MASTA in Honduras which led to refocusing on collective rather than individual land titling for indigenous people.

In eight cases, change accelerated or reached scale when change agents took advantage of a window of opportunity to present, implement or scale a solution. Windows of opportunity included the end of a conflict, a new and supportive government, new international levers or opportunities to partner or collaborate with others, sometimes themselves the result of previous advocacy campaigns or struggles.

Sudden external shocks did not seem to play a significant role in achieving structural change in selected cases, as the cases were documented before COVID-19. The only structural change catalysed by a sudden external shock was the 50% reduction in water consumption achieved by Cape Town municipality and residents due to an impending water shortage. As institutional theory suggests, this may be because external shocks have less influence in challenging contexts that are already unstable and experience frequent change (Capoccia, 2016). Alternatively, it might be due to unexplained selection bias in the cases. Either way, the subsequent shock of COVID-19 has prompted significant changes to governments' policies, organizational practices and people's behaviours. Such radical changes may become a more common pattern as, and if, other crises intensify.

The following types of external trends enabled or constrained structural change and scaling:

Long term macro pressures. In several cases the pressure of long term macro trends influenced structural factors which in turn enabled scaling. Changes to government policy and practice were in part driven by climatic impacts in East Africa (ACCRA), deforestation in Brazil (Bolsa Verde) and the Pamir mountains (Pamir Energy), and water shortages in Cape Town. Changes to farming practices in the Sahel were driven by resource degradation. Increases in women's political participation in Pakistan were influenced by slow changes in cultural beliefs, themselves in part the result of previous influencing efforts by civil society. A strong community culture of service and availability of time was cited as a key contextual reason in the MenCare programme in Rwanda.

Changes to the political context or power dynamics. Growing national or international understanding and recognition of systemic problems and solutions influenced structural change in nine cases and could be inferred in others. Conducive national politics were cited in other cases, including shifting power relations and political dynamics linked to civil society campaigns, new governments or leaders, or supportive organizations. Additionally, in at least six cases,

international support or pressures from donors, INGOs and international conventions and laws were cited as contributory factors driving change.

The availability of new technologies. For example, solar power systems are very expensive and unaffordable to buy upfront, even for middle income families in some countries. In the Zambia case, the availability of pay-as-you-go technology (previously only used for mobile phones) made it possible for people who were previously unable to afford energy (let alone renewable energy) to obtain solar home systems or benefit from a local solar grid. The apps for budget monitoring in Pakistan helped to scale up change. But new technology featured less in the case studies than expected. This may be because there are few cases of large-scale technological innovations reducing poverty without also exacerbating inequality, or because it is too early for cases that demonstrate impact at scale to have been documented.

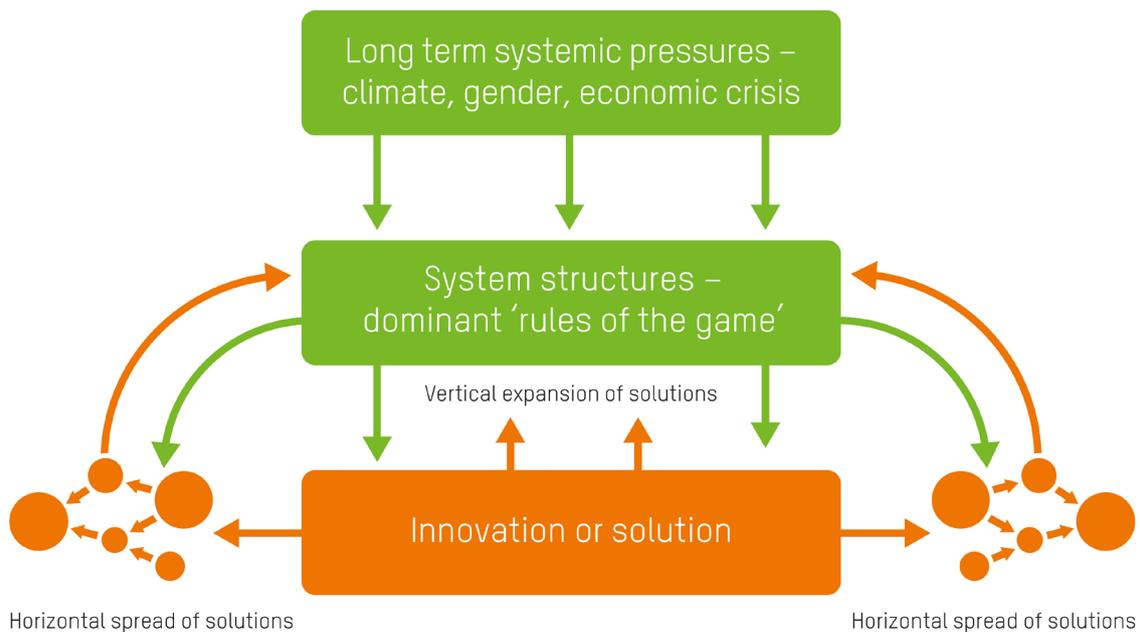
Windows of opportunity. Eight cases took advantage of immediate contextual windows of opportunity to achieve structural change and accelerate scaling. Windows of opportunity included the end of conflict (in Tajikistan and Medellín in Colombia), a supportive government in office (Brazil, Ethiopia, Honduras), supportive international financial or legal instruments (a new IMF loan for GRB in Pakistan and World Bank policy for Honduras), a new international lever (the introduction of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in the Unilever case) and landscape pressures (impending water shortages in Cape Town). Of course, some windows of opportunity were themselves the product of previously political struggles or campaigns.

Constraints. All cases had to overcome resistance and political, economic, institutional or technical constraints. Constraining factors include political opposition, opposition by vested and corporate interests, capture of state policy by vested interests, and 'land grabs' by fossil fuel, palm oil or cattle industries or land-hungry farmers. Other structural constraints include land tenure systems, cultural and religious factors, misguided policies, lack of enabling policies, lack of funding, weak institutional systems, market distortions (e.g. fossil fuel subsidies), and global demand for forest products.

SCALING PATHWAYS AND CHANGE STRATEGIES

Scaling up has been defined as '...expanding, adapting and sustaining successful policies, programs or projects in different places and over time to reach a greater number of people' (World Bank, 2004) with multiple possible pathways (e.g. Carter et al, 2018; Jonasova and Cooke, 2012; Cordova, 2019; Davies and Simon, 2013). This section explores the scaling pathways and change strategies identified in the case studies (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Scaling pathways



HORIZONTAL SCALING

One key pathway highlighted by the cases is horizontal scaling i.e. the widespread copying or adaptation of an alternative, innovation or solution by other actors so it spreads beyond the original case. Innovations may involve new policies, practices, behaviours, technologies, or infrastructure.

Horizontal scaling often involves a two-stage process. The first stage involves the successful development and testing of a solution or alternative, often outside the mainstream (Geels and Schot, 2007). In the second stage the solutions scale horizontally either through markets (Rogers, 1995), personal social networks (Granovetter, 1973), between governments or other organizations (Braithwaite and Drahos, 2000), or between communities (Smith and Seyfang, 2013).

Spontaneous horizontal scaling of innovations is more likely to occur if they provide a solution to a recognized problem, if they are visible, actively communicated, have advantages over existing practices, are compatible with existing values and rules of the game, are promoted by powerful actors, are simple to adopt; if conducive social networks exist (e.g. see Geels and Schot, 2007; Rogers, 1995; Granovetter, 1973). Conversely, they are less likely to spread spontaneously if the reverse applies. In the latter cases, proactive complementary strategies will be needed to help ensure scaling.

So what do the case studies tell us about how horizontal scaling was achieved?

Horizontal pathways

The cases highlight the following horizontal pathways to scale:

The largely spontaneous horizontal scaling of innovations or solutions. In the Sahel and Cuba agroecology cases, farmers developed simple changes to farming practices that then spread rapidly with limited external assistance from NGOs or governments. Scaling appeared to

occur because: (1) the agroecological practices provided a needed solution to the systemic pressures of soil degradation (the Sahel) and a lack of fossil fuel-based fertilizers (Cuba); (2) the new practices were developed by local farmers, helping ensure their relevance; (3) there were conducive social networks between farmers, in the Cuba agro-ecology case facilitated by ANAP (see below) and; (4) horizontal scaling appears to have met little resistance from vested interests, perhaps in part because it involved degraded and marginal land, at least in the Sahel.

Assisted or organized horizontal scaling of innovations or solutions. In the first stage a group, community, village or organization developed and tested a solution, in these cases new social norms, behaviours, or business practices. Because the solutions were sensitive or difficult to learn, this was then followed by a second stage of 'organized diffusion' (Cislaghi et al., 2019). Organized diffusion happened in three main ways in the cases:

- The establishment of community-based organizations that collectively developed solutions or innovations, followed by local leaders and influential champions from the initiatives cascading them to others. In Senegal, village committees had been set up to raise awareness of human rights and create and share new norms and behaviours (Tostan). In Pakistan, women's groups were established to strengthen women's leadership and political participation. In both cases, the original groups cascaded newly learned social norms and behaviours to other villages, communities or women.
- Umbrella organizations or associations create (global) platforms to share proven methodologies and support partners or members to adopt solutions. MenCare provides provided consistent value-based but adaptable methodologies and resources based on open source evidence for partners to adapt to their own contexts, in order to spread new norms and behaviours and influence policy. In the case of Fair Trade, the WFTO provides verification for Fair Trade businesses and networks and helps them find markets. The farmer-to-farmer movement in Cuba supported to and facilitated 'learning by doing' for farmers to learn, adapt and adopt agroecological practices from each other.

Key insights and success ingredients for horizontal scaling

The cases highlight the **remarkable ability of ordinary people – women, men, farmers, communities, small mission led business and social movements – to create, share and spread bottom-up solutions to systemic problems** themselves including:

- The enduring power of participatory processes to create new social norms and behaviours and strengthen individual agency and collective capacity. MenCare, Tostan's Community Empowerment Programme in Senegal, and the campaign to strengthen women's political participation in Pakistan used a mix of critical awareness-raising (Freire, 1972), community mobilization and participatory group-based social learning processes (Bandura, 1977). It is notable that none of the cases created or scaled up new behaviours or practices via information provision or digital means alone.
- The impressive scale that can be achieved through horizontal diffusion, whether via spontaneous or organized processes. Horizontal scaling represents an important way of contributing to systemic change (Geels and Schot, 2007; Braithwaite and Drahos, 2000; UNDP, 2013). But it can be neglected by governments and donors who do not recognize its potential or mistakenly consider it to be too resource-intensive. In Cuba and the Sahel, governments are beginning to recognize and support agroecology, but policies and financial incentive frameworks still lag behind. If the dominant rules of the game – particularly government policy – do not change to support new innovations or solutions, they may remain stuck or wither away (Grin et al., 2011). But governments and donors need to take care if nurturing or scaling grass-roots solutions not to inadvertently damage them. For example, in Cuba the farmer to farmer movement scaled most rapidly when ANAP ended its previous reliance on project-based donor funding. Governments could also do more to adapt successful solutions from each other.

Vertical scaling

Vertical scaling is a better known and perhaps more widely attempted pathway. It occurs when large and powerful institutions, in particular national governments but also large corporations or international institutions, use their size, reach, power and leverage to expand an initiative. Scaling may occur when such institutions (1) nurture and enable a successful (structural) solution to achieve scale e.g. via supportive laws, policies, incentives, infrastructure or (2) directly implement a solution or innovation themselves e.g. whether new policies, practices, behaviours, services or infrastructures etc.

Research shows that government policy change comes about when there is a confluence of recognized problems, mature solutions and a conducive political environment, such as changes in public opinion or pressure from advocacy campaigns (Kingdon, 1984; Kingdon, 2002). When this happens, other actors can contribute to policy change by packaging up and presenting solutions to governments (Cairney, 2018). However, such windows of opportunity may only happen periodically, so change agents may also need to use complementary influencing strategies to help create them in the first place.

So, what light do the cases shed on vertical scaling pathways and strategies?

Types of vertical scaling pathway

The case studies describe five distinct vertical pathways to achieve scale:

- Changing government law or policy plus strengthening of civil society voice and widening of political space and enforcement mechanisms. For example, the campaign in Bangladesh to secure protection for female domestic workers.
- Changing government law or policy plus changing official or public behaviours. For example, the Ugandan persuaded wealthy individuals in Uganda to increase their tax payments through a combination of individual persuasion and pressure. The City of Cape Town halved water consumption in three years by introducing bans but combining this with an effective media campaign and enforcement mechanisms.
- Changing government or corporate practices (rather than laws or policies). For example, a group of INGOs strategically convened and acted as a trusted facilitator between national and local government and local communities in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda, helping mainstream more gender-sensitive and participatory climate adaptation practices across government which in turn strengthened the adaptive capacities and livelihoods of local people (ACCRA). Government and local communities in Bangladesh worked in tandem to monitor gender-specific government budgets and expenditure, contributing to an increase in the government spending on girls' education. Oxfam's 'critical friendship' with Unilever contributed to improving worker wages.
- Providing new clean, inclusive transport or energy infrastructure. Clean and affordable energy schemes in Zambia (BGFZ) and Tajikistan/Afghanistan (Pamir Energy) and an inclusive transport scheme in Colombia powered by clean energy (Medellín Metrocable) generated multiple economic, health and social co-benefits at scale for lower-income and remote communities.
- Market transformation policies. For example, BGFZ in Zambia and Pamir Energy in Tajikistan, used donor and government subsidies respectively to incentivize access to clean energy for lower-income or remote communities, alongside other measures to remove barriers to scaling such as the creation of regulatory frameworks.

Insights and success ingredients for vertical scaling

The cases confirm the power of government to achieve vertical scale but also suggest that introducing a new law or policy on its own will not necessarily translate into real impact for people without complementary structural changes. When implemented and

enforced, changes to national government policy can be crucial ways of achieving change at scale. They can also send a powerful signal and message which shape public attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (Htun and Weldon, 2010; Kendi, 2019). However, there are many examples of government laws and policies that are not implemented, enforced or adhered to (Hughes, 2017). The cases of legal and policy change also included influencing strategies to strengthen civil society voice and participation in decision-making to claim citizens' rights, and strengthen enforcement mechanisms and/or influence the norms and behaviours of officials and the public.

Changing the institutional practices of government can offer a fast, direct and transformational pathway for achieving vertical scale. The mainstreaming of GRB in Pakistan and more climate- and gender-responsive decision making in Ethiopia (ACCRA) achieved transformational change at scale relatively rapidly. In contrast, achieving changes to government laws and policies can take a long time, can be diluted by vested interests (e.g. in the case of domestic workers in Bangladesh) or may not be implemented or enforced.

The cases highlight the sometimes overlooked but still important role that governments can play in shifting harmful behaviours, whether those of government officials in the ACCRA and GRB cases, taxpayers in the Uganda case, or the public in the Cape Town case. In relation to the public, Governments tend to avoid using legislation to ban public behaviours due to concerns about individual liberty or the fear that people will circumvent or disobey the rules. However, evidence suggests that government legislation can be effective when accompanied by participatory bottom-up social learning processes (e.g. the Tostan case in West Africa), if there is a strong and accepted public rationale (e.g. facing an emergency) and if there are clear enforcement mechanisms (Avineri et al., 2009). Both the latter conditions held true in Cape Town, where the municipality reduced residents' water consumption by a remarkable 50% in three years. However, its failure to adequately engage with marginalized communities and involve them in policy design and implementation meant that measures exacerbated existing water inequalities.

The cases confirm much existing knowledge from research and practice about how to influence or achieve impact vertical scaling (e.g. see Shephard et al, 2018; Sanchez and Lenton, 2018). This includes the value of:

- Complementing policy change with changes to practice, behaviours, enforcement and monitoring mechanisms, alongside civil society strengthening;
- Mobilizing and building constituencies and coalitions in support of change e.g. the formation of an alliance of workers organizations in Bangladesh to win government protection for domestic workers or an alliance of indigenous communities in Honduras to win back their historic rights to land, or gradually expanding the number of organizations involved in GRB in Pakistan;
- Building and nurturing good-quality relationships, such as ACCRA's unique consortium of government, civil society and NGOs in East Africa or the 'critical friendship' between Oxfam and Unilever;
- Taking strategic advantage of windows of opportunity whether to present solutions to government (e.g. proposing GRB for a new IMF loan in Pakistan) or to directly implement them (e.g. as in the cases of Pamir Energy in Tajikistan/Afghanistan and Medellín Metrocable in Colombia);
- Using a mix of persuasion and pressure to achieve change in government policy or practice. For example:
 - The Pakistani government mixed tactics – stick (mandated change) and carrot (awareness raising and training) – with government officials to mainstream gender-responsive budgeting.
 - The Ugandan government's efforts to increase the amount of tax paid by HNWI's involved face-to-face meetings with individuals to persuade them to behave as 'good citizens', combined with a threat of increased scrutiny.

- In Bangladesh, the civil society campaign to strengthen protections for domestic workers successfully used a mix of insider and outsider influencing strategies to influence government policy;
- Strengthening the involvement of marginalized groups in political decision making;
- Using multi-level influencing or forum shifting between local, national and international levels and forums to leverage change – for example, the Miskito people in Honduras taking advantage of ILO conventions and World Bank support for GRB in Pakistan using an IMF loan.

FUNCTIONAL SCALING

Functional scaling involves intentionally increasing the scope, pace or scale of change via iterative adaptations of and improvements to the original initiative. Improvements may be made in performance, reach, inclusivity, efficiency, ways of working, change strategies, business models, or even scaling pathways. Research on transitions (Geels and Schott, 2007) and the thinking and working politically approach (Menocal, et al., 2018) both emphasize the importance of this pathway for successful scaling.

The case studies highlight how functional scaling can help achieve horizontal or vertical scale. Many of the case studies include research, monitoring or evaluation to identify and understand a problem, test a proof of concept or adapt and improve an existing approach or methodology.

For example, MHT in India helped **improve the reach, scale and quality of public services** to marginalized communities via a strategic partnership with local municipalities and service providers. The organization empowers women to influence local service providers; poor women also act as enablers or incubators of innovative services, products or solutions, which allow these to be tested, validated and customized as needed. For example, dual-purpose ventilators help to mitigate the impacts of more severe heat waves (linked to climate change) by improving air circulation to reduce indoor temperatures and ease indoor pollution, and also provide natural lighting. Following a one-month period to trial the innovations, households are given the chance to buy the equipment. MHT then facilitates microfinance loans to make the solutions accessible for residents of informal urban settlements.

Adaptive learning also figured in other cases:

- The Government of Pakistan increased spending on schooling for girls due to gendered monitoring of budgets.
- Iterative experimentation was a key feature of the spread of agroecology in the Sahel.
- MenCare in Rwanda encourages partners around the world to carry out formative research in their own countries and to adapt its methodologies.
- Unilever's commitment to pay its workers a living wage was catalysed by an in-depth study carried out by Oxfam.

A mix of scaling pathways

Almost all the cases (17 out of 18) used a mix of vertical, horizontal and functional scaling pathways. For example, Promundo's approach to global scaling includes: horizontal scaling, focused on changing attitudes, norms and practices of men via participatory education groups; vertical scaling, which supports partners to influence government policy; and functional scaling through formative research and rigorous evaluation to ensure that methodologies and change strategies are context-relevant and evidence-based.

In India, MHT's work involves a mutually reinforcing cycle of horizontal and vertical scaling. Women are mobilized and empowered by creating community-based organizations (horizontal scaling). They then influence local authority service delivery and test improved services or new solutions (vertical scaling), which in turn spread horizontally and influence service delivery.

WHO ACHIEVED SCALE

This section looks at what type and mix of actors and coalitions are needed to catalyse, accelerate, shape and implement radical, transformative and inclusive change at scale.

BACKGROUND

During the 1950s-70s, the governments of many nations played an active role in running the economies, including both newly independent ex-colonial states and Western governments, often with business and formal trade unions. The ascendancy of free market economics from the 1980s onwards, was associated with processes of privatization, sub-contracting and liberalization which in lower-income countries was frequently imposed by donor conditionalities. These processes saw the private sector and other actors take on roles previously undertaken by governments, with some governments shifting from 'doing' to 'steering' roles. Deregulation of labour markets contributed to a weakening of organized labour, with new social movements emerging around identity issues, notably gender and the environmental. Combined with the rise of information technology, this stimulated more horizontal and networked forms of governance in some countries, with a much wider range of possible actors involved than previously¹⁶ (Castells, 1996; Braithwaite and Drahos, 2000; Marsh et al., 2006).

In this evolving context, what do the case studies show in terms of the types of actors and collaboration needed to achieve radical and inclusive change at scale?

TYPES OF COLLABORATION

The case studies included (elements of) national and local government, the private sector, civil society (grassroots associations, social movements, unions and workers' organizations and national and international NGOs); research institutions; individuals (farmers); influential individuals (local leaders, faith leaders); intergovernmental bodies and multilateral agencies (UN Women, ILO, World Bank, IMF); and bilateral donors.

In line with systems thinking, **few case studies achieved scaling through a single actor working on their own**. Change was the outcome of mutually reinforcing efforts of different organizations or tactical or strategic collaborations between them. The only partial exceptions included Regreening the Sahel (farmer-to-farmer networks), agroecology in Cuba (farmers' social movement) and the Miskito people's struggle for land rights in Honduras (social movement). These initiatives were predominantly driven by grassroots initiatives.

Several cases emerged from more unusual **strategic collaborations**. For example in India, the strategic partnership between Mahila Housing Trust (a grassroots NGO born from the social movement SEWA), women from informal urban settlements, and local authorities was one of the more innovative ways of achieving radical and inclusive change at scale. Collaborations between civil society and government institutions are not without risks of co-option for social movements and therefore may be shunned. However, the documentation suggests that in MHT's case the collaboration provided a strategic, notable and highly effective way to improve the reach and quality of government services. Another example is the unique consortium of institutions involved in the ACCRA initiative in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda, in which INGOs became a trusted actor and played an important convening role between national and local governments, communities and CSOs.

Other examples of effective coalitions included:

- Collaboration between local women leaders, male champions and faith leaders and INGOs in the Strengthening Women's Political Participation in Pakistan initiative;
- Tactical collaborations between civil society and government for action on shared causes e.g. taxing HNWI in Uganda;
- Loose collaborations between umbrella organizations such as MenCare and WFTO and their members/partners;
- The Miskito people's Association (MASTA) in Honduras, which became a representative umbrella group for other indigenous groups;
- An alliance of trade unions and human rights groups with domestic workers in Bangladesh.

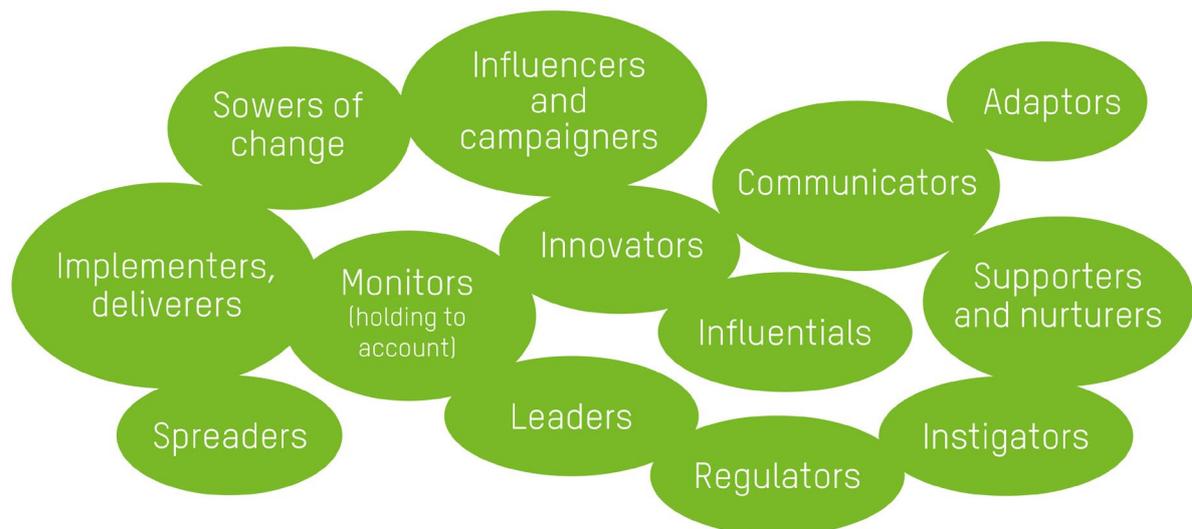
A more contentious form of collaboration is the public–private partnership (PPP) between the government, Aga Khan Foundation (an NGO) and a company, to reduce energy poverty in Tajikistan (Pamir Energy). PPPs have been rightly criticized for skewing decision making and financial gains in favour of private shareholders, transferring costs and risks to the host government or to customers, providing poor value for money and creating large debts. (World Bank, 2016 and 2019; Willoughby, 2014). However, the Pamir PPP, which was established at the end of the conflict in Afghanistan when the government had limited resources and capacity, appears to have avoided many of these problems.

All these collaborations required the ability to identify influential individuals and institutions, build and maintain good quality relationships over time, manage the inevitable tensions and conflicts that arise, and evolve in line with changing contexts.

ROLES OF INDIVIDUAL ACTORS

Within these collaborations, certain actors need to step up and play specific roles, notably government, the private sector, and trade unions and CSOs (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Scaling roles



Government

Governments can be inefficient, repressive, corrupt or captured by powerful economic interests (Hayek, 1944; Fund for Peace, 2019; Alonso, 2018). Yet they remain critical actors due to their vital role in collective decision making, their formal accountability to citizens and the reach and range of powers and instruments at their disposal. Unsurprisingly, national and local governments feature in many of the case studies. In five cases, individuals or departments within governments instigated or played a leading role in driving and implementing change, as well as playing crucial roles in other cases as innovators, funders, implementers, enablers, supporters or regulators of radical change. They were able to draw on diverse powers and instruments (tax and spend, policy, direct delivery) to reach large numbers of people.

Governments were innovative. For example, the Bolsa Verde scheme in Brazil provided social protection through a community contract as well as financially rewarding individuals who moved away from unsustainable practices. Non-compliance was dealt with through discussion rather than punishment. Government actors also acted in an agile manner. For example, the municipality of Cape Town responded rapidly to water shortages, while that of Medellín took advantage of a window of opportunity opened by reduced conflict to initiate infrastructure projects. Nevertheless, to ensure scaling was inclusive, most successful cases involving government entailed some kind of consultation with or involvement by civil society. Governments and intergovernmental bodies also played important roles as donors, for example incentivising clean energy provision in the cases of BGFZ and Pamir Energy.

Private sector

Over recent decades, the private sector has taken on many roles that were previously seen as the preserve of government. Its ethos and practices have been imported and copied by both government and the third sector, despite evidence of excessive profiteering, inefficiency and negative social and environmental impacts from big business (Gneiting et al., 2018).

Five of the cases (Pamir Energy, BGFZ in Zambia, Medellín Metrocable, WFTO and Unilever) involved private sector actors. Their roles were mainly the provision of infrastructure and the production and sale of goods and services, although some (Unilever and WFTO) were also involved in networking and influencing others. The initiatives involving the private sector were all able to reach large numbers of people, and private sector actors played important roles as innovators, drivers, implementers and marketers. However, in the case of Unilever, despite the company's huge economic size and its global policy commitment to a minimum wage for its employees, it struggled to achieve influence over workers' rights in its global supply chains, highlighting the continuing need for government regulation and effective enforcement.

None of the private sector actors involved in the cases, apart from the mission-led businesses linked to the WFTO, achieved inclusive impacts at scale on their own. They were either contracted or incentivised by local authorities (Medellín Metrocable), government and development agencies (Pamir Energy), civil society (Unilever) or donors (BGFZ). This is not surprising, as current business law and practice in many countries prioritizes financial returns to shareholders over the interests of workers, communities and the environment.

CSOs

Workers' movements played a key role worldwide in the post-war period and were associated with the development of more equitable societies. Recently, evidence has accumulated showing that social movements, grassroots organizations and women's rights organizations are also key drivers of social change (Gaventa and Barrett, 2011; Htun and Weldon, 2012). Yet, despite examples of social movements influencing or even overturning governments, they are often considered ineffective in bringing about large-scale change. Additionally, NGOs, and perhaps

INGOs in particular, have faced increasing criticism in recent years for crowding out grassroots voices or for lacking representativity or legitimacy, among other things.

Civil society featured strongly in nearly all the case studies, whether as designers, innovators, drivers, implementers, influencers, convenors, facilitators, enrollers or funders. They included grassroots social movements, membership organizations (e.g. trade unions), NGOs, faith organizations and INGOs.

The case studies show that as well as driving social change, **grassroots social movements can also achieve inclusive impact at scale**. This is illustrated by the struggle of the Miskito indigenous people in Honduras for land-scale titling and self-governance and the coalition of trade unions, workers and human rights organizations in Bangladesh achieving government protection for domestic workers. MHT in India also achieved change at scale via its strategic partnership with local authorities.

CSOs did not deliver infrastructure, goods or services, but they played an important role in ensuring positive and inclusive outcomes from governments and corporations. Civil society campaigns and influencing also helped governments and corporations to achieve positive outcomes, such as Uganda's HNWI tax initiative or Oxfam's 'critical friendship' with Unilever. Cases that did not involve civil society were less likely to be inclusive.

Despite recent questioning and criticisms of INGOs for displacing local CSOs, seven of the cases highlighted several supportive roles that INGOs (can) continue to play. Besides their well-known roles in campaigning, civil society strengthening, service delivery, and practical or financial support, other less conventional INGOs roles included acting as:

- Strategic convenor;
- Trusted intermediary or critical friend;
- An umbrella organization e.g. providing methodologies, verification and resources to be shared with and adapted by 'partners';
- A facilitator of change and organized diffusion.

Oxfam involvement was not a selection criterion for the case studies but it was involved actively in seven cases, five recently and two historically (Greening the Sahel and WFTO).

Individual leaders and people with influence

Effective leadership was important for both vertical and horizontal scaling in several cases. For example, among the civil society initiatives, new leadership helped the Miskito people in Honduras and the small farmers movement Cuba to achieve change at scale. The training of women leaders in Pakistan and by MHT in India was a central element of their strategies. Government and business leadership was also important, whether by local government leaders in Medellín, who identified an opportunity for new green and inclusive transport systems, or Unilever seeking to model good practice to other companies.

Some cases, such as that of Strengthening Women's Political Participation in Pakistan, Tostan's village-level human rights education initiative in West Africa, and MHT's work with women in the urban informal sector in India, demonstrated the importance of working with and training local leaders to scale up change.

AN EVIDENCE BASE FOR HOPE

Hope is not wishful thinking or empty optimism. It has a foundation. The *Inspiring Better Futures* series of case studies shows how women and men around the world, both in their communities and in their workplaces, are already creating more caring, inclusive and green futures that will benefit millions of people in some of the world's most challenging contexts. As such they offer compelling examples of how the world can 'build back better' in ways that improves lives, reduces inequalities and support the transition to a zero carbon future.

WHAT CHANGED

The case studies show that it is possible to achieve positive impact at scale:

- In lower-income countries, even those afflicted by conflict, extreme inequalities and injustices, limited political freedoms, or the climate crisis – which sets a powerful precedent and challenge for change elsewhere;
- That individually reaches and benefits tens of thousands of women and men, and collectively millions;
- Generates multiple benefits that simultaneously reduce poverty, gender injustice and/or environmental damage;
- That is inclusive and reduces poverty, if and when there is equitable design and affected people are involved in design and delivery.

The cases also show that it is possible to improve lives at scale by changing deep-seated structural features of the world's dominant economic, political and cultural belief systems, something long considered too difficult or radical by the establishment but which, if successful, can reduce or stop problems being generated in the first place.

HOW CHANGE HAPPENED

All the cases achieved scale in the last decade, although often with longer histories. In most cases scaling occurred due to the interaction of intentional strategies of different actors, changing power dynamics between them, and longer-term contextual drivers or windows of opportunity. Successful scaling as shown in the cases requires:

Common factors for successful scaling included:

1. A vision of a better world, an unshakeable belief that this is possible and worth fighting for and a dogged commitment to create and scale solutions even against the odds;
2. An integrated approach that simultaneously seeks to reduce poverty, inequality, environmental damage and gender injustice;
3. A focus on identifying and addressing structural changes to engender widespread change and prevent or reduce similar problems emerging in the future;
4. A deliberate linking of scaling and inclusivity, which involves and supports affected and marginalized groups in creating and scaling solutions;

5. A long-term strategy to create or widen windows of opportunity, with the political judgement and agility to take advantage of them (or external shocks) to scale solutions when they arise;
6. A mix of mutually reinforcing pathways to scale including:
 - The often-overlooked and remarkable power of ordinary women and men in their communities, organisations and workplaces to create, share and spread bottom-up solutions to systemic problems themselves (horizontal scaling);
 - The expansion of solutions by government or other large-scale institutions – either by implementing or supporting solutions via changes to policies, institutional practises, decision-making processes, infrastructures, incentives, accountability and enforcement mechanisms, and/or officials' and public norms and behaviours (vertical scaling);
 - Iteratively testing, adapting and improving strategies to accelerate development and uptake (in-depth scaling).

WHO ACHIEVED CHANGE

Change was predominantly achieved by the mutually reinforcing efforts or strategic collaborations between progressive elements of civil society, government and businesses, alongside others.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Looking forward, the pressure from intensifying crises combined with the spontaneous development and scaling of solutions could catalyse radical changes to the dominant rules of the game, in turn heralding more rapid scaling. But there is also a real and significant risk that entrenched vested interests and government capture will slow or skew change in favour of the wealthy and powerful.

The future direction and speed of change will depend critically on investing in, expanding and accelerating the development and scaling of the kind of transformative, inclusive and sustainable solutions offered by these case studies.

Given that one of the key ways that change happens is by people copying, adapting and spreading good ideas and solutions, Oxfam hopes that the series will inspire, inform and catalyse further change.

ANNEX 1: CASE STUDIES AT A GLANCE

Name and organizations	Systemic challenges	Country	Poverty and environmental impacts	Structural changes
Gender Justice (six cases)				
<p><u><i>Communities shifting social norms to end female genital cutting in West Africa</i></u></p> <p>Local communities, INGO (Tostan)</p>	Gender injustice	West Africa	<p>N=3</p> <p>Strengthened voice and agency.</p> <p>Decrease in gender-based violence (GBV).</p> <p>Decline in rates of FGM/C and child marriage.</p>	<p>N=4</p> <p>Strengthened understanding of rights and changes in attitudes and beliefs toward gender injustice.</p> <p>Increased awareness and knowledge of the consequences of FGM/C and of opportunities to discuss these collectively in safe spaces.</p> <p>Changes to harmful social norms underpinning GBV.</p> <p>Increasing women's decision-making power within the household and in the community.</p>
<p><u><i>Strengthening women's political participation in Pakistan</i></u></p> <p>Local women, local NGO (Aurat Foundation), INGO (Oxfam)</p>	Gender injustice, economic inequality	Pakistan	<p>N=3</p> <p>Strengthened political participation of women in governance.</p> <p>Strengthened government accountability and responsiveness to gender issues.</p> <p>Economic empowerment/increased incomes for women.</p>	<p>N=2</p> <p>Strengthened women's leadership, collective capacity and voice in decision making.</p> <p>Changes to government policy.</p>
<p><u><i>MenCare: Engaging fathers in transforming gender relations</i></u></p> <p>INGO (Promundo), local NGOs, men's groups</p>	Gender injustice	Rwanda, global	<p>N=3</p> <p>Reduced violence against women and girls (VAWG).</p> <p>Increased contribution by men to caring roles.</p> <p>Greater equality in household decision making.</p>	<p>N=3</p> <p>Changes in household gender/power relations.</p> <p>Changes in attitudes and social norms e.g. to value women's care work.</p> <p>Changes in government policy and practices.</p>

<p><u>Unleashing the potential of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and technology to reduce gender disparities</u></p> <p>Government, local NGOs, research institutions, INGOs</p>	<p>Gender injustice, economic inequality</p>	<p>Pakistan</p>	<p>N=2</p> <p>Increased access to education for girls and reduced gender gap.</p> <p>Strengthened political participation and influence of local people. (Future benefit from girls' education not captured.)</p>	<p>N=4</p> <p>Strengthened voice and shifts in power relations.</p> <p>Gender-responsive changes to official government practices.</p> <p>Use of new technologies.</p> <p>Gendered material improvements to schools (education service).</p>
<p><u>Securing protection for women domestic workers in Bangladesh.</u></p> <p>Unions, NGOs, Government, INGO (Oxfam)</p>	<p>Gender injustice, economic inequality</p>	<p>Bangladesh</p>	<p>N=3</p> <p>Increased income and access to services</p> <p>Greater security and freedom from abuse/exploitation.</p> <p>Strengthened voice.</p>	<p>N=3</p> <p>Changes to power and gender relationships.</p> <p>Changes to government policy.</p> <p>Changes to employers' beliefs and behaviours e.g. valuing of domestic work.</p>
<p><u>Empowering women to upgrade their homes</u></p> <p>Local NGO (Mahila Housing SEWA Trust India (MHT)), local government</p>	<p>Gender injustice, economic inequality, climate crisis</p>	<p>India, Nepal, Bangladesh</p>	<p>N=6</p> <p>Strengthened participation of women in and influence over local decision making.</p> <p>Increased security of home tenure and ownership.</p> <p>Improved access to sanitation, clean water and clean energy.</p> <p>Strengthened resilience to the climate crisis.</p> <p>Improved livelihoods and incomes.</p> <p>Reduced carbon emissions.</p>	<p>N=6</p> <p>Changes in power relations between women and service providers.</p> <p>More responsive local political decision making by service providers.</p> <p>Improvements in quality and reach of service delivery.</p> <p>Access to finance.</p> <p>Improved skills for women.</p> <p>Changes in cultural beliefs/attitudes.</p>

Climate and Environmental Improvement (seven cases)				
<p><u><i>Regreening the Sahel: A quite agroecological revolution</i></u></p> <p>Farmers, NGOs (historically including Oxfam)</p>	<p>Climate crisis, economic inequality</p>	<p>West Africa</p>	<p>N=5</p> <p>Improved access to natural resources.</p> <p>Improved food security.</p> <p>Increased incomes.</p> <p>Positive climatic changes.</p> <p>Reduced gender injustice.</p>	<p>N=3</p> <p>Spread of sustainable farming innovations and practices.</p> <p>Restoration of soils and water.</p> <p>Minor changes to government policy.</p>
<p><u><i>Protecting People and the Forest. (Bolsa Verde)</i></u></p> <p>National government, local people</p>	<p>Climate crisis, economic inequality</p>	<p>Brazil</p>	<p>N=4</p> <p>Increased incomes.</p> <p>Reduced deforestation. More secure access to natural resources.</p> <p>Sustainable livelihoods.</p>	<p>N=4</p> <p>New and improved government safety nets.</p> <p>More sustainable farming behaviours and practices.</p> <p>Strengthened skills for farmers.</p> <p>Improved access to tools.</p>
<p><u><i>Avoiding Day Zero: How Cape Town cut its water usage by 50% in three years</i></u></p> <p>City government, local people</p>	<p>Climate crisis</p>	<p>South Africa</p>	<p>N=1</p> <p>Access to water and hence health safeguarded (but inequalities in access to water exacerbated).</p>	<p>N=2</p> <p>Changes to government policy and practice/service.</p> <p>Greater awareness and spread of sustainable public water consumption behaviours.</p>
<p><u><i>Bringing clean energy and co-benefits to remote communities in Tajikistan and Afghanistan: Pamir Energy</i></u></p> <p>Government, NGO (Aga Khan Foundation), energy company (Pamir Energy), donors</p>	<p>Climate crisis, economic inequality</p>	<p>Afghanistan/ Tajikistan</p>	<p>N= 7</p> <p>Reduced carbon emissions.</p> <p>Access to clean and affordable energy (hydro).</p> <p>Greater energy security, and financial savings.</p> <p>Improved quality of life.</p> <p>Increased income due to reduced energy costs.</p> <p>Improved education and health.</p> <p>Reduction in deforestation.</p>	<p>N =3</p> <p>Strengthened energy infrastructures and human resources.</p> <p>New institutional arrangements.</p> <p>More environmentally sustainable energy behaviours.</p>

			Reduction in time spent by women looking for firewood.	
<p><u>Climate Change Adaptation in East Africa: Mainstreaming gender-responsive and participatory approaches</u></p> <p>Consortium (ACCRA) of national & local government, CSOs, INGOs (includes Oxfam).</p>	<p>Climate crisis, gender injustice, economic inequality</p>	<p>Ethiopia (plus Uganda and Mozambique)</p>	<p>N=4</p> <p>Strengthened voice of marginalized communities.</p> <p>Increased political participation of marginalized communities.</p> <p>Strengthened adaptive capacity for women and men.</p> <p>Improved local livelihoods.</p>	<p>N=2</p> <p>Mainstreaming of more inclusive, and gender responsive government approaches to climate change adaptation</p> <p>Improved and integrated climate crisis planning across ministries, sectors and directorate.</p>
<p><u>Scaling Sustainable Agriculture: The farmer-led agroecology movement in Cuba</u></p> <p>Farmers, small farmers movement (ANAP)</p>	<p>Climate crisis, economic inequality, some aspects of gender injustice</p>	<p>Cuba</p>	<p>N=7</p> <p>Reduced carbon emissions.</p> <p>Increased productivity.</p> <p>Increased food self-sufficiency and access to more nutritious food.</p> <p>Increased resilience to climate risk.</p> <p>More secure access to resources.</p> <p>Increased rural inclusion.</p> <p>Reduction in some aspects of gender inequality.</p>	<p>N=5</p> <p>Spread of innovative and sustainable farming practices and behaviours.</p> <p>Strengthened voice and collective capacity of farmers (also impact).</p> <p>Restoration of soil and water.</p> <p>Strengthened knowledge and skills of farmers.</p> <p>Small changes to government policies and practices.</p>
<p><u>Reducing Energy Poverty (Beyond the Grid Fund for Zambia - BGFZ)</u></p> <p>Bilateral donor (SIDA), Zambian government, companies.</p>	<p>Climate crisis, Gender justice</p>	<p>Zambia</p>	<p>N=8</p> <p>Reduced carbon emissions.</p> <p>Increased access to clean energy.</p> <p>Strengthened energy security.</p> <p>Improved indoor air quality.</p> <p>Financial savings on energy bills.</p> <p>Improved education.</p> <p>Improved communications.</p> <p>Improved jobs/incomes.</p>	<p>N=3</p> <p>Market incentives for renewables.</p> <p>New regulatory frameworks.</p> <p>Provision of new energy infrastructure, technologies and services by private sector.</p>

Economic Equality (five cases)				
<p><u><i>Metrocables in Medellin: An innovative, inclusive and green transit system.</i></u></p> <p>Local government company, residents</p>	<p>Economic inequality, climate crisis</p>	<p>Colombia</p>	<p>N=5</p> <p>Reduced spatial isolation.</p> <p>Increased social inclusion. Increased income linked to better access to employment opportunities and increased tourism.</p> <p>Reduced spatial stigmatization.</p> <p>Reduced carbon emissions from transport.</p>	<p>N=2</p> <p>New green and inclusive transport infrastructure enabling increased mobility and access to employment, and increased tourism.</p> <p>More inclusive local government decision making.</p>
<p><u><i>The Word Fair Trade Organization (WFTO): Scaling equitable business models</i></u></p> <p>Local producers, international umbrella association (WFTO), I/NGOs (Oxfam historically)</p>	<p>Economic inequality, gender injustice, climate crisis</p>	<p>Globally, with case study in Rwanda</p>	<p>N=5</p> <p>Strengthened voice, ownership and control over livelihoods.</p> <p>Fair and dignified work.</p> <p>Increased incomes.</p> <p>Strengthened social security (including maternity leave, healthcare and pensions).</p> <p>Mitigation of negative environmental impacts.</p>	<p>N=2</p> <p>Company business models and practices.</p> <p>Power and gender relations in production, trade and markets.</p>
<p><u><i>A Quiet Revolution: land Justice for Miskito Indigenous Peoples in Honduras</i></u></p> <p>Indigenous association (Muskitia Asla Tanaka - MASTA)</p>	<p>Economic inequality</p>	<p>Honduras</p>	<p>N=3</p> <p>Righting of historic injustice.</p> <p>More secure access to land.</p> <p>Self-governance.</p>	<p>N=4</p> <p>Collective land titling.</p> <p>Empowerment and community mobilization.</p> <p>Strengthened enforcement of land titles.</p> <p>Legal requirement of prior consent for development.</p>

<p><u>Widening the Tax Base of Low-Income Countries: Taxing high net worth individuals (HNWIs)</u></p> <p>Government, local NGOs, INGO (Oxfam)</p>	<p>Economic inequality</p>	<p>Uganda</p>	<p>N=2</p> <p>Fairer tax system, including increased tax revenue from HNWIs.</p> <p>Increased spending on key social services.</p>	<p>N=3</p> <p>Changes to government practices.</p> <p>Changes in power dynamics between HNWIs and government.</p> <p>Changes in behaviours of HNWIs.</p>
<p><u>How Oxfam Worked with Unilever to Enhance its Social Impact</u></p> <p>Company, workers organizations, NGOs, INGO (Oxfam)</p>	<p>Economic inequality</p>	<p>Global, with Vietnam case study</p>	<p>N=3</p> <p>Higher wages.</p> <p>Increased job and income security (for men).</p> <p>Reduced working hours.</p>	<p>N=4</p> <p>Government minimum wage.</p> <p>Corporate policies and practice.</p> <p>Changed power dynamics and behaviours between workers and management.</p> <p>Changes in attitude and behaviours of company personnel and suppliers.</p>

Notes: (a) Organisations are only listed if they have played an active implementing role (b) the quality and credibility of data for impact claims varies (see Annex 2)

ANNEX 2: RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA QUALITY

The following methods were used to help maximize research quality.

Research concept and questions

The research concept and questions, selection criteria and format for the series were informed by a review of relevant political science and scaling literature, practical learning from Oxfam and partners (including evaluations, case studies, meta reviews), and tested with various people inside and outside Oxfam including two workshops.

Case Selection

A longlist of approximately 78 potential case studies was identified via an internal and external call, key individuals and a search of websites using a 'snowball' approach. The longlist of cases was then whittled down to a shortlist of 18 by 2-3 thematic experts per theme which best fulfilled the criteria and also represented a mix of different themes and types of solution. After further research a small number of shortlisted cases were found not to have strong independent impact data but were retained if impact could be inferred from a wider body of reliable evidence or because they had useful learning. Case studies were vetted and shortlisted by thematic experts, after which a final selection was made by the authors.

Research methods

The case studies were mainly researched by independent researchers, or in a few cases co-authored with partners or staff. Resource limitations meant that research for the case study was based mainly on existing secondary documentation supplemented by supplementary interviews with or review by people with knowledge of the case study. Use was made of accepted research methods and triangulation of multiple sources of secondary data, including independent evaluations where they existed. The research approach, methods, sources and caveats were documented. All cases were required to include an analysis of contextual drivers to help with assessment of their contribution.

Data limitations

Nevertheless, some caution is needed regarding the quality of data, particularly in relation to case study impact and contribution. First, the quality, reliability and coverage of the evidence varies for each case. While there was often relatively strong evidence for outcomes, data on impact, case study contribution or attribution and disaggregated intersectional data were difficult to find. As mentioned above, in some cases, impact at scale has been inferred from data on reach and outcomes where a wider reliable body of evidence exists to justify this e.g. positive future impacts of increased access to girls' education or increased government spending on health. In some of the global cases, wider global impact has been inferred from impact studies in individual countries. Second, there is a possibility of positive bias, with case study authors over-reporting or not adequately verifying, or unaware of unintended outcomes and impacts. Countering this, there is the possibility of under-reporting of benefits and impacts, as indirect reach, ripple effects or long-term benefits are rarely included in impact numbers. For example, girls' schooling (GRB in Pakistan) and improved health (e.g. Cape Town water case) are known to generate multiple long-term benefits, but they feature in the case studies as a single benefit. Data sources and limitations are outlined in the case studies, in relation to outcomes, impacts and contribution.

Biases

Independent researchers researched most of the case studies and each case critically assessed the limitations/trade-offs, as well as positive impacts/outcomes. This was followed by a rigorous commenting and peer review process involving a person with knowledge of the case plus independent experts¹⁷ and the commissioning manager. Two independent researchers cross-analysed the data, which were then sent out again to peer review by and independent experts, researchers and case study contacts.

Transferability and comparability of cases

The same template was used for each case, informed by the literature review and learning from the experience of Oxfam and its partners, to generate comparable case studies, while fully acknowledging that the contexts and sources on which cases are based vary considerably. Contextual information is provided to allow some assessment of the extent to which insights from the cases may or may not have relevance in different contexts.

Interpretation of findings

Four to 10 cases are normally considered sufficient for theory building. In this series there are six to seven cases per theme. Due to variability of impact data, care has been taken only to draw out insights rather than build concepts or to attempt any theorization from the cases. The findings from these cases could, however, be used to inform hypotheses for future research.

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NOTES

- ¹ Meso-level change became the focus as it forces looking at change processes involving many change agents, including civil society actors, at a scale that goes beyond local (micro) successes without duplicating documentation on national level (macro) change.
- ² Known as the Overton window, or 'window of discourse' refers to those policies politically acceptable to a majority at a given time.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overton_window#:~:text=The%20Overton%20window%20is%20the,is%20named%20after%20Joseph%20P.
- ³ *Financial Times*. (2020). *Virus lays bare the frailty of the social contract*.
<https://www.ft.com/content/7eff769a-74dd-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>
- ⁴ Meso-level change became the focus as it forces looking at change processes involving many change agents, including civil society actors, at a scale that goes beyond local (micro) successes without duplicating documentation on national level (macro) change.
- ⁵ World Bank Country Studies: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/4392>
- ⁶ The Rapid Transition Alliances gathers, share and demonstrate evidence of what is already possible to remove excuses for inaction and show ways ahead, including stories of community action, innovative policy or pivotal moments. <https://www.rapidtransition.org/>
- ⁷ Note that the indicators and indices on which they are based have shortcomings and some ratings may be contested by civil society, governments or others.
- ⁸ Ranking 142 or less out of 189 countries.
- ⁹ This list includes only countries that CIVICUS categorizes as 'repressed' or 'closed' (vs obstructed, narrowed or open). Vietnam or Cuba are not included in the list because some civil society organizations in these organizations do not agree that political space is 'closed' and therefore contest the rating'

It does not include Vietnam, as Oxfam's Vietnam office contests the categorization of the country as 'closed'.
- ¹⁰ For example see <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/active-citizenship-case-studies>
- ¹¹ For example, a just transition to a zero carbon future would respects people's rights and means, ensuring that responsibilities, costs and benefits are shared fairly so that those with the greatest responsibility and capacities bear the biggest costs and lower emitters are able to share the benefits.
- ¹² This is in line with thinking on system leverage points (Meadows, 1999).
- ¹³ Includes system goals, i.e what the system values and counts
- ¹⁴ Institutional theory
- ¹⁵ Punctuated Equilibrium
- ¹⁶ As well as government, business and trade unions, this includes quangos, contracted companies or not-for-profit organizations, professional associations, policy networks or standard setting bodies.
- ¹⁷ Except in the case of MenCare and MHT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxfam acknowledges and thanks the inspired, courageous and determined people involved in the Inspiring Better Futures case studies who have demonstrated that radically better futures are within our reach. It also acknowledges and thanks the many people around the world who have generously given their time and contributed to the series whether by helping with research design and methods, nominating and identifying cases, shortlisting, research, reviewing drafts, commenting, editing, formatting or design. These include: Seher Afsheen, Uzma Aftab, Rokshana Akther, Muhammad Ali, Shovcat Alizadeh, Sonia Alvarez, Pankaj Anand, Liana Anderson, Norisbel Arronte, Alice Uwase Anukur, Filippo Artuso, Margaret Barihaihi, Hannah Beardon, Peter Brand, Mme Bijal Brahmabhatt, Ranu Bhogal, Emily Brown, Marlene Buchy, Roberto Cabellero, Yuna Chang, Ben Cislighi, John Colvin, Diana Belén Córdova-Aráuz, Rukia Cornelius, Adama Coulibaly, Dipankar Datta, Sam Dick, Rotafino Donco, Beth Donkin, Kate Doyle, Kelsey Doyle, Richard English, Patricia Espinoza, Jerome Faure, Gustavo Ferroni, Tom Fuller, Aapta Garg, Gezahegn Kebede Gebrehana, Elena Gentili, Gannon Gillespie, Emily Gillingham, Leah Good, Matt Grainger, Duncan Green, Tijani Ahmed Hanza, Grace Higdon, Vu Thi Quynh Hoa, Dr Md Khalid Hossain, Sahar Ibrahim, Kristin Johnson, Dailes Judges, Daanika Rabael Kamal, Sara Khan, Rebecca Khattak, David Keeling, Merja Laakso, Babeth Ngoc Han Lefur, Simone Lombardini, John Magrath, Lucy Martin, Alex Maitland, Katie McCoshan, Saba Mebrahtu Habte, Carlos Mejia, Molly Melching, Sasha Milonova, Amy Moran, James Morrissey, Sam Nadel, Grace Namugambe, Farrukh Nazarmavloev, Khar Ndiaye, Peter Newell, Armando Nova, Jane Ocaya, Francis Odokorach, Joseph Olwenyi, Anam Parvez Butt, Hajera Pasha, Dean Peacock, Oli Pearce, Toni Pearce, Angela Picciariello, S.M Monjur Rashid, George Redman, Asim Riaz, Steven Robins, Sarah Rose, Peter Rosset, Laura Roper, Christian Rupietta, Erinch Sahan, Andreas Sahner, Emma Seery, Michael Sommer, Anthea Spinks, Richard Simpson, Marine Torre, Pham Thu Thuy, Liesbeth Unge, Emma Wadley, Bryony Wallace, Luis Vasquez, Nigel Willmott, Helen Wishart, Rachel Wilshaw, David Wilson, Po Yin Wong, and Nazma Yesmin.

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Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International under ISBN 978-1-78748-674-4 in December 2020.

DOI: 10.21201/2020.6744

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