

RIGHTS NOW!

World Poverty and the Oxfam Campaign

Dave Dalton



Published by Oxfam (UK and Ireland)
First published 1995

© Oxfam (UK and Ireland) 1995

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 0 85598 338 8

Available in Ireland from Oxfam in Ireland, 19 Clanwilliam Terrace,
Dublin 2 (tel. 01 661 8544).

Published by Oxfam (UK and Ireland), 274 Banbury Road, Oxford
OX2 7DZ, UK

Front cover photograph by Marc French/Oxfam

Designed by Oxfam Design Department OX370/PK/95
Typeset in Palatino and Franklin Gothic
Printed by Oxfam Print Unit

Oxfam is registered as a charity, no. 202918

This book converted to digital file in 2010

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**Oxfam
UK and Ireland**

Our common humanity transcends the oceans
and all national boundaries ... Let it never be asked
of any of us: what did we do when we knew another
was oppressed?

*Nelson Mandela,
President, Republic of South Africa*

Absolute poverty is a condition of life so limited
by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease,
squalid surroundings, high infant mortality,
and low life expectancy as to be beneath any
reasonable definition of human decency.

*Robert McNamara,
President of the World Bank, 1978*

People's basic rights belong to all of us, and
everybody in Africa and South America and
wherever has a right to these things,
just the same as us.

Oxfam supporter



Rights for all?

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Most of us in the rich countries of 'the North' (Europe, North America, Japan, and Australasia) can expect a long and healthy life, security, and opportunity. Our children will be educated. Most of us need never be cold, or hungry, or frightened. We have a say in how our countries are run. Most of the time we take these things for granted. We regard them as rights.

Over one billion people in the poor countries of 'the South' (Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean) are denied most of the rights which we enjoy. Why are children in

Haiti scavenging on rubbish tips when they should be in school? Nearly 50 years after the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, why are so many people still poor and powerless?

This booklet explains why. It shows that the world could afford to abolish poverty. It shows what people in the South are doing about their problems, and what Northern governments can do. And we'll see how we — as citizens and consumers — can help. We can work for a future for all of us, North and South.



Marc French/Oxfam

Stories behind the statistics

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Your child comes to you in the evening carrying an empty milk pot and crying, 'Where is my cow?' You say, 'Why are you asking? Didn't it get ill and die?' But he keeps crying, 'Dada, give me some milk. Mama, give me some milk.' Hearing this can make a person commit suicide.

(Ulikoro, a cattle-herder in a drought-stricken area of Ethiopia)



Nick Fogden/Oxfam

They say free trade is good for our country: they say it will bring more opportunity. But we can't compete with this American maize. How can they produce it so cheap? What are we to do? Our only opportunity is to leave our land and move to the city.

(Miguel, a maize farmer in Mexico)

I take my children to the building site at 7.30. They play while I mix cement. The lorries rush by all day. You always wonder if your children will end up under a wheel.

(Palu, a 22-year-old woman in Bangalore, South India)

It's like being dead. Without legs, what can I do?

(José Jamie, a farmer and father of six children, interviewed in hospital in Angola, five days after stepping on an anti-personnel land mine)

The voices of Ulikoro, Miguel, Palu, and José tell the human stories that statistics only hint at. They tell us that poverty means frustration, fear, hunger, and insecurity.

The facts

35,000 children throughout the world die *every day* because they are poor.

Half a million women die each year because they don't receive the health care they need when they are pregnant.

130 million children do not go to primary school.

80 per cent of all illness in the world is caused by drinking dirty water.

18 million people are refugees, and a further 24 million are displaced within their own countries.

100 million people were affected by famine in 1990.

Women own one per cent of the world's property.

The North, with 25 per cent of the world's population, consumes 80 per cent of the world's energy.

Looking at the statistics of poverty, you might think that this is just the way things are: 'The poor are always with us.' But there is nothing inevitable about poverty. The world can afford to wipe it out. Governments and powerful institutions choose not to. And ordinary people like us let them get away with it.

Good news at the grassroots

Poor people struggle for their rights, and with help they can succeed. Democracy has come to South Africa; peace to El Salvador and Mozambique. There's good news at the grassroots, too: farmers growing more sorghum in Kenya; families getting clean water in Cambodia; village savings and credit schemes in Indonesia; women learning to read and write in Senegal; immunisation for children in Jamaica. Local people do the work and take the risks; Oxfam provides help and advice; and things get better.

John Barraclough/Oxfam



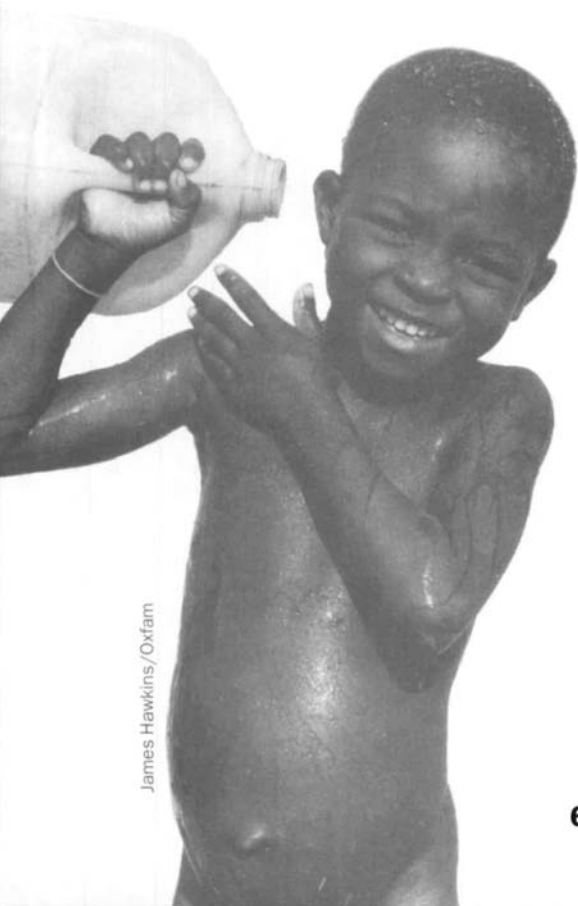
Basic rights

Together for rights, together against poverty

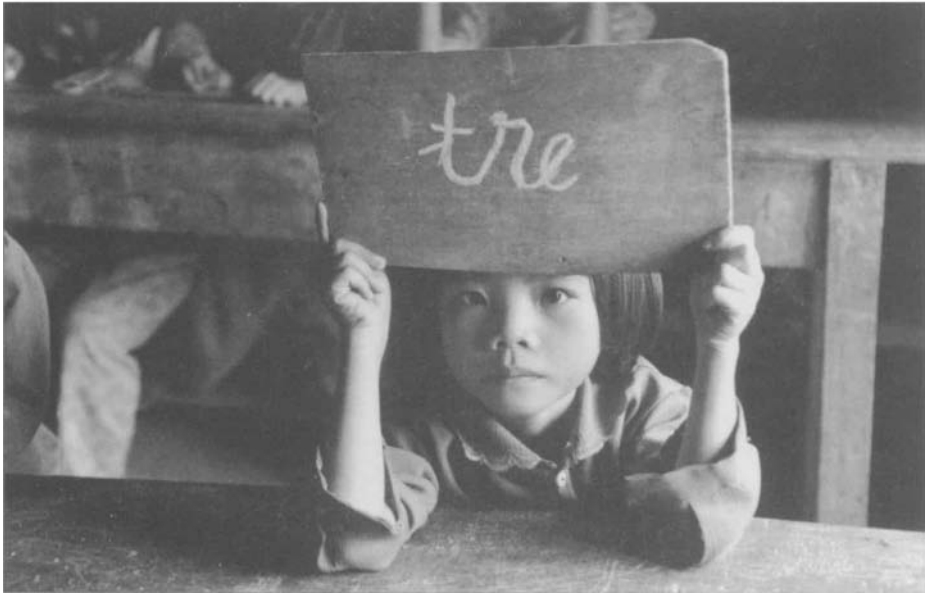
Every man, woman, and child has a basic right to a life free from misery and want. Yet one thousand million people around the world live in poverty. Denied their basic rights, they are denied the fullness of life that is their birthright.

Every person has ten basic rights:

- *Enough to eat* — but 800 million people are malnourished.
- *Clean water* — but more than one billion people are at risk from contaminated supplies.
- *A livelihood* — but 700 million people are unemployed in the South.
- *A home* — but millions of children live on the streets of the world's cities.
- *An education* — but there are 800 million illiterate people in the South.
- *Health care* — but one child in ten in the South dies before the age of five.
- *A safe environment* — but in many Southern countries workers are exposed to dangerous levels of pesticides, in order to produce standardized, unblemished fruit for Northern markets.
- *Protection from violence* — but there are 82 large-scale conflicts currently going on in the world, and 90 per cent of the casualties are civilians.
- *Equality of opportunity* — but people are exploited or ignored for reasons of race, sex, religion, or nationality.
- *A say in their future* — but poor people are the last to be heard and the first to suffer.



James Hawkins/Oxfam



These rights are a daily reality for most of us in the North, so why should they be denied to so many in the South?

At the end of the Second World War the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank were created, to ensure that never again would violence and conflict be allowed to destroy lives, and never again would poverty and mass unemployment be tolerated. The UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognised that all the peoples of the world have a range of civil, political, social, and economic rights. The realisation of those basic rights would be a major contribution to the fight against poverty. It would give people the means to work for their own future.

These rights are recognised by almost every government in the world, and there has been some progress towards making them a reality. But for many people these rights are being ignored and undermined, and the result is poverty.

Making rights a reality will cost money. But the world can afford it. It would cost £6 billion a year to provide basic education for all children. The world's governments spend £666 billion a year on armies and weapons. And African governments have to spend more on repaying debts to the North than they do on the health and education of their citizens.

Poverty and power

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The richer you are, the more power you have. Of course, not everyone in the North is rich; and not everybody in the South is poor. There are rich and powerful elites within Southern countries; right down to the smallest village and the individual household, wealth and power are not fairly shared. But most of the real power is in the North: it lies with Northern governments; with big companies based in the North; and with international institutions like the UN,

IMF, and World Bank, which are dominated by Northern governments and Northern interests. How are Northern power and Southern poverty connected?

Debt

The South owes the North £115 billion. Many countries have debts they can never pay. This means two things. First, they are being sucked dry by the debt: the South paid the North over £4 billion in 1994. Second, the World Bank and IMF have enormous power over Southern governments which owe them money. The 'adjustments' which they demand in return for loans — such as cutting government spending and imposing charges for social services — hurt ordinary people most. What hope for poor people's right to health care and education?

Trade

Poor countries are under pressure to open their markets to goods from the North. But our markets are often closed to goods from the South. We pay low prices for commodities produced in the South, like coffee and copper; and we dump heavily subsidised food exports, like surplus beef from the European Union, on Southern markets, under-



Jenny Matthews/Oxfam

cutting local producers. What hope do poor people have for the right to a livelihood?

Environment

The impact of the average US citizen on the environment is 250 times that of the average African. If everyone on the planet were to achieve Northern levels of consumption, two extra planet Earths would be needed. Northern lifestyles are fundamentally unsustainable.

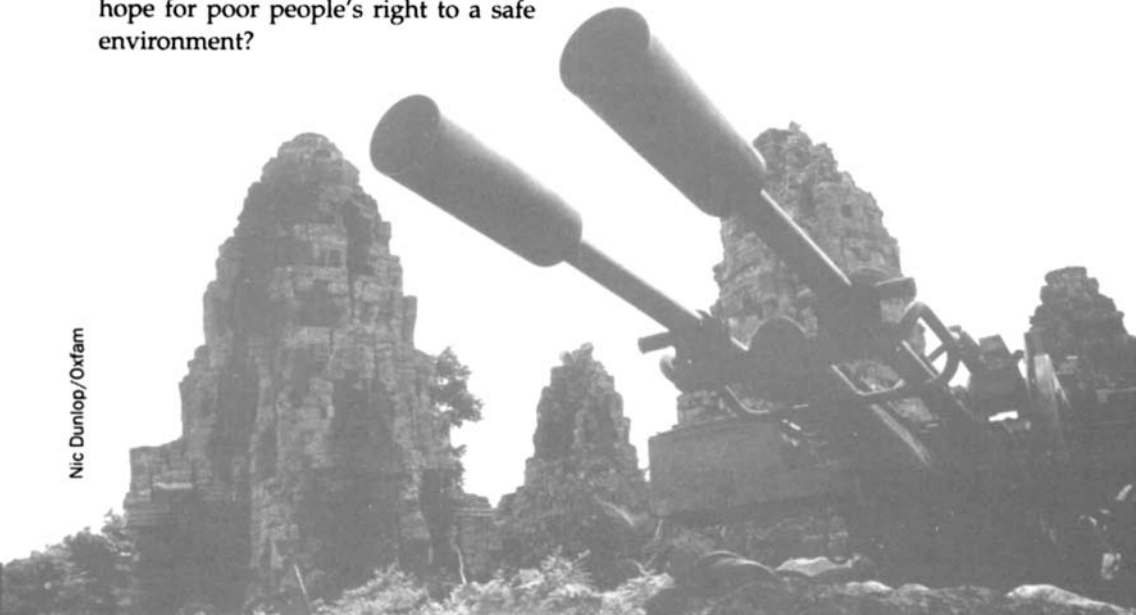
If power stations and vehicle exhausts continue to emit carbon dioxide at ever-increasing levels, and more and more forests — which absorb carbon dioxide — are chopped down, temperatures are likely to rise. Global warming may create more deserts, and will certainly cause sea-levels to rise. Low-lying countries will suffer, but those in the North, like the Netherlands, can afford to protect themselves better than those in the South, like Bangladesh. What hope for poor people's right to a safe environment?

Armaments

Powerful groups in the South squander money on armaments. For just 16 per cent of what they currently spend on weapons, the world's poorest countries could give all children a basic education, reduce child deaths by one third, and provide clean water supplies for everyone.

The rich make the rules

The rich make the rules, and the poor stay poor — or get poorer. Yet most of the governments which make the rules have signed the declarations of human rights. It's time they delivered what they promised.



Campaigning works

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Are you concerned about world poverty? Despite the powerful forces that keep people poor, you are not powerless. As a citizen, you have a voice and a vote. As a consumer, you have a choice. People like you are campaigning for Fair Trade, helping people like Florence Muhindo (pictured below), from Kenya.

Florence is poor because the price she gets for the coffee she grows is so low. She is one of millions made poor by

unfair trade. Farmers growing commodities like coffee, tea, or cocoa, workers in textile and clothing factories, miners producing copper or tin — all are denied a decent livelihood in a system dominated by the interests of the North.

Oxfam, along with other development agencies, wants to see Third World producers like Florence getting a decent price for their products. Shoppers in this country like the idea too: 85 per cent of people surveyed said they would like to see more Fair Trade products in their supermarkets. It's time for people-friendly shopping.

Oxfam has been trading fairly since 1965. Oxfam's Bridge programme buys crafts and foods from Third World producers on Fair Trade terms. Crafts producers are given high priority, because they often have no land of their own on which to grow food. Bridge goods are sold through 625 Oxfam shops up and down the country, and to 40,000 people by mail-order catalogue. Bridge staff here and overseas provide advice and training on design, marketing, and other practical matters.

Since 1992 Oxfam has campaigned to move Fair Trade into the mainstream:



Geoff Sayer/Oxfam

into the supermarkets, where most people do their shopping. Now consumers everywhere can buy Cafédirect — a high-quality coffee, made from beans bought at a fair price, direct from small-scale producers. Cafédirect sold its millionth pack of ground coffee in March 1994. Instant Cafédirect came out in the summer of 1994.

More Fair Trade products, like tea and chocolate, are arriving. The independent *Fairtrade Mark* helps shoppers to identify products which give a better deal to Third World producers and respect the local environment.

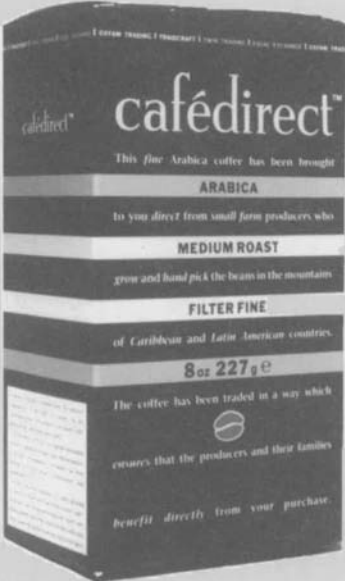
Since 1992, Oxfam's campaigning supporters have been writing letters to supermarkets and organising coffee tastings to promote Fair Trade. The

Guarantees
a **better deal**
for Third World
Producers



Fairtrade

Fair Trade campaign is a good example of how campaigning works. It's easy to join in. If you buy Fair Trade goods, you are giving direct support to the people who produce them in the South. As these products sell, more supermarkets will make more products available. So buy Fair Trade products, and tell your friends about Fair Trade. Use your voice and your choice.



**You get great coffee
... they get an
education**

"The higher price we get when we sell coffee to Cafédirect means that now our co-operative can afford to pay a doctor who will give treatment to our members. For myself, the price difference has meant that I can afford more food for my family and send my children to school properly equipped with pens and notebooks for the first time."

*José Rivera Campoverde, coffee grower,
Peru*

Get active

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In June 1995 Oxfam launched The Oxfam Campaign: *Together For Rights, Together Against Poverty*. Thousands of ordinary people in this country are joining people in the South in their struggle for their rights. We can press for basic rights to be respected, for resources to be switched to making those rights a reality — to create the political will for change by showing our anger at the daily reality of poverty and suffering.

Take the issue of anti-personnel mines. There are up to 110 million such mines scattered across 60 countries. Every day more than 20 civilians are killed by them, and more than double that number are severely injured. And that means pain and trauma for the victims, and families plunged into poverty. Oxfam works to help rehabilitate the victims; to clear mines, and to make people aware of their dangers; and to press for a total ban on their manufacture, stockpiling, export, and use. Oxfam is actively lobbying governments, and has published a book on the scourge of mines. Oxfam campaigners' letters to the relevant Minister resulted in our government banning all anti-personnel mines except those that self-destruct or self-neutralise. But this is still not enough. The campaign for a total ban continues.

People in this country can join the Oxfam Campaign by:

- *raising money* to help support Oxfam's work, including its lobbying work;
- *raising awareness* among the wider public;
- *raising issues* with the relevant decision-makers, whether MPs, Ministers, the European Union, or the United Nations.

The continuing work on Fair Trade shows how effective ordinary people, acting together, can be. The Oxfam Campaign will last five years, so specific issues, targets, and actions will develop over that time. The first action is to get as many signatures as possible on a Global Charter for Basic Rights — the rights listed on pages 6 and 7. The Charter will demonstrate to governments and other powerful bodies that there is a widespread popular desire to defend basic rights, and a demand for action to bring an end to poverty.

This is a global campaign. Campaigning for rights is happening in the North and South.

In Brazil, the Hunger Campaign aims to motivate citizens to tackle the poverty in their own country. Brazil is

the world's second largest agricultural exporter; but in 1994 32 million people out of a total population of 154 million were living in absolute poverty. One third of all Brazilians do not have enough to eat, and the Hunger Campaign aims to put poverty high on the political agenda.

In Zambia, Oxfam encouraged ordinary people to write letters to world leaders, describing how their lives had been affected by the country's policies on debt and structural adjustment, prescribed by the World Bank and IMF.

The letters — 15,000 of them — were taken by Lucy Muyoyeta, Oxfam's Zambia Representative, to Kenneth Clarke MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the September 1993 meeting of the IMF. There Mr Clarke backed Oxfam's call for debt relief for Africa, and in 1994 the leaders of the seven largest industrialised nations agreed better terms for spreading repayments and writing off debts.

Together — North and South, lobbyists and campaigners, citizens and consumers — we can make a difference.



Julie Harrington/Oxfam

A..... **n agenda for change**

A world in which rights can become a reality must provide opportunity, participation, a fairer distribution of wealth and power, peace and security, and a safe and sustainable environment — for all people.

Opportunity

Access to basic health and education services should be universal. To make the rights to health and education a reality, Southern governments should:

- cut user charges on basic services;
- greatly reduce military spending;
- and redirect funds into basic social services.

Northern donors should increase aid and make sure that at least 20 per cent is spent on basic social services.

There should be a co-ordinated strategy and improved terms for debt relief, including:

- writing off 80-100 per cent of debts owed to Northern governments;
- agreement on new measures to tackle the growing crisis of debt owed to international institutions like the IMF, to be financed from within these institutions.

Participation

Democratic institutions need to be created and strengthened, from village associations to an independent judiciary, to give people the right to a voice.

A fairer distribution of wealth and power

Resources, particularly land and credit, must be more fairly distributed, so that poor women and men can have the means to earn a living.

The World Bank should make poverty-reduction the goal of economic reforms and involve poor people in their design.

All forms of discrimination against women must be outlawed, so that, for example, they can own and inherit land and have the right to be paid at the same rates as men.

Poor producers should receive fair prices for their commodities. Double standards in closing rich world markets to poor producers while pushing open poor countries' markets should be ended. Rich countries should stop over-producing and dumping subsidised exports on poor countries.

Consumers can help poor producers to get a fair price for their labour by:

- buying Fair Trade goods wherever possible;
- putting pressure on retailers and suppliers to make more Fair Trade goods available.

Peace and security

Governments should strengthen the UN's capacity to prevent and resolve conflict, quickly and effectively. They should set up a permanent rapid-deployment force, ready to be sent instantly to conflict zones, together with human-rights monitors. They should invest in preventive diplomacy and reducing poverty.

The international community should do more to help countries to rebuild after conflict.

Action is needed to reduce the international arms trade, including a worldwide ban on the manufacture, stockpiling, export, and use of anti-personnel mines.

A safe and sustainable environment

Action by rich industrialised countries should include:

- demonstrating their commitment to the recommendations of the Rio Earth Summit Agenda 21, by

providing the resources which they pledged;

- reducing their own energy use, with tougher energy-efficiency standards, building-insulation schemes, investment in renewable energy sources such as solar or wind power, and tax penalties for over-exploitation of natural resources;
- committing themselves to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 30 per cent from 1989 levels by 2005.

Individuals can act locally to protect their environment, by saving energy and recycling resources wherever possible.



Geoff Sayer/Oxfam

Find out more

Knowledge is power

You could make yourself a more effective campaigner for rights by doing some more reading. All the books listed below are published by Oxfam (UK and Ireland); they are available from local bookshops or by ringing 01202 715555.

Words Into Action: Basic Rights and the Campaign against World Poverty
by Pat Simmons

The Oxfam Poverty Report
by Kevin Watkins

No Time to Waste: Poverty and the Global Environment
by Joan Davidson and Dorothy Myers

One Earth, Two Worlds
by John Barraclough and Dave Dalton

The Trade Trap: Poverty and the Global Commodity Markets
by Belinda Coote

A Buyer's Market: Global Trade, Southern Poverty, and Northern Action
by Dave Dalton

A Case for Reform: 50 Years of the IMF and the World Bank
by Oxfam Policy Department

Together for rights, together against poverty

Get together with like-minded people to campaign more effectively. To join the Oxfam Campaign, just write to:

The Operations Centre, Oxfam House
274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ
Telephone: 01865 312456

Together we can defeat poverty. Join the Campaign — and start making a difference.

