

VOICES



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OXFAM
Australia

Connections

with Lyn Morgain, Chief Executive

What strange times we find ourselves in; I hope you and your loved ones are well. I am deeply aware of the difficult circumstances many are dealing with these days and it makes me feel even more grateful to our generous supporters. Thank you for your continued compassion in the face of adversity. I hope that the tales of resilience and triumph on these pages – which you have made possible – lift your spirits.

As you can imagine, in response to COVID-19 we have scaled up much of our work around the world, providing essential water and sanitation, healthcare supplies and training. On pages 4–5 we share details of this important work with you.

Before the pandemic kept us all at home, I had the privilege of visiting the Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, to see the water and sanitation work we are doing there. This included the large faecal sludge management plant that we have built on the outskirts of the camp, to process the sewerage from the latrine pit toilets.

While not a selection of words I ever thought I'd write in a column, I must say the plant was impressive; an innovative design that was initially built to handle the waste of 100,000 people, but soon to handle upwards of 1 million. It was wonderful to meet some of the Rohingya refugees who work there as staff, too.

I hope you enjoy similar stories of essential frontline work in this issue of *Voices*.



Photo: M R Hasan/OxfamAUS

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Our life-changing development programs and life-saving humanitarian efforts are made possible by the generous support of donors like you and the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Oxfam Australia acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians of the land, and respects the rights that they hold as traditional custodians. We also recognise the dispossession of the land and its ongoing effects on First Nations peoples today.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this publication may contain images or names of people who have since passed away.

Thanks to you ...

Our advocacy work in Cambodia has contributed to the government's decision to pause the building of hydropower dams, protecting fisheries that the population rely on for food and employment.

Our extractive industries work continues to have a big impact in southern Africa.

Recently in Malawi, a community used our lobbying toolkit to put pressure on a coal mining company to deliver promised infrastructure. The company has now built a footbridge for the community and repaired a water borehole that was damaged, in exchange for consent to operate in the area.



Stung Treng, Cambodia: Lok Chanthaou (standing on left with two women farmer champions) is deputy chief of the committee for eco-tourism in her village. She is concerned a dam would impact fishing and business. She says: "Oxfam helped us learn to protect our natural resources, and how to work with the local [government]." Photo: Savann Oeurm/Oxfam.

Cover image: Bubi District, Zimbabwe: Purity* enjoys having access to clean running water for the first time from a tap connected to an Oxfam solar-powered water system. Photo: Aurelie Marrier D'Unienville/Oxfam.

*Name changed to protect identity

YOU & OXFAM
TACKLING POVERTY TOGETHER



Photo: Fabeha Monir/OxfamAUS

COVID-19 response

Using our knowledge in water and hygiene, Oxfam helped contain the world's worst outbreak of Ebola. With your help, we are doing the same again, working to save as many lives as we can.

The coronavirus pandemic is impacting us all, indiscriminately spreading through communities across the globe. But as a humanitarian organisation, we're anxious that the most disadvantaged communities — those already struggling with inadequate food, water and healthcare — are facing the greatest threat to their lives and livelihoods.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, Oxfam has been working with communities, partners, governments and key United Nations agencies in 65 of the most vulnerable countries to coordinate

our response. At Oxfam Australia that means we're scaling up work in the most at-risk countries in our region and beyond, adjusting existing programs to respond to the emergency.

"All of our closest neighbours are at high risk of the spread of COVID-19 and some of the countries we are working in are particularly vulnerable, including South Sudan, Yemen and Bangladesh," says Oxfam Australia's Humanitarian Lead, Josh Hallwright.

In addition to these countries we've also been preparing for — and addressing — the pandemic in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Timor-Leste, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

So what exactly does that work look like? "It depends on the phase of the pandemic in that particular country," explains Josh. "Initially, we're focussed on delivering accessible public health messages and raising awareness of the disease and its impacts, alongside the provision of clean water, public handwashing facilities and hygiene kits with soap, hand sanitiser, masks and towels."

Such public health messaging is disseminated in all sorts of ways depending on what will reach the people — whether that's via pamphlets and newspapers, radio, billboards, mobile buses or even roadshows before lockdown. In Papua New Guinea we're trialling an emergency hotline for people seeking advice, guidance and counselling.

"As the disease spreads," says Josh, "we're distributing personal protective equipment, upskilling staff, helping communities access health care, providing cash grants to families, hot meals to migrant and informal workers, and helping ensure people's rights are upheld through lockdown."

While this work is crucial in all vulnerable countries, Oxfam's gravest concerns are for the communities experiencing a crisis on top of a crisis, such as Rohingya refugees in overcrowded camps, and marginalised communities in India and Bangladesh now dealing with the devastating impacts of super cyclone Amphan as well as the virus.

We're also deeply concerned about the impact measures like lockdown are having on women, including increases in caring responsibilities and gender-based violence, and people in casual work, many of whom are now trying to live without an income. We are working these concerns into our advocacy and public awareness efforts.

"We are definitely helping reduce the impact of the disease on communities around the world and hope to do much more so in the near future." — Josh Hallwright

Josh says that from a humanitarian perspective we are already seeing positive results in some areas in which we've given people life-saving assistance and prevented them slipping further into poverty. "We are definitely helping reduce the impact of the disease on communities around the world and hope to do much more so in the near future," he says.

It's good news for the frontline. But the humanitarian and economic recovery of the pandemic is a longer road. "We expect next year to be even more challenging," says Josh. "Our ability to support literally millions of people will hinge on the support we receive from people in luckier countries, such as ours."



Photo: Duke Ivn Amin/JAGO NARI



Photo: Oxfam in Timor-Leste

For more up-to-date information about our COVID-19 work, go to www.oxfam.org.au/coronavirus-response/



Photo: Patrick Moran/OxfamAUS

The sweet taste of independence

Farming and selling honey is enabling women in the highlands of Papua New Guinea to earn a living and lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

If there's one thing we've learnt working with vulnerable communities around the world, it's that helping people gain financial independence is the best way to help them kick poverty and inequality.

So, with your support, we've been empowering women in Papua New Guinea to make a sustainable living through beekeeping.

In partnership with community organisations, local businesses and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Oxfam has been providing training, kits and market solutions to women like Onano John.

Onano is a bee farmer who got her start after attending a series of training workshops offered by Oxfam partner, New Guinea Fruit Co LTD. The mother of three young children jumped at the opportunity to learn new ways of earning an income.

"I attended three trainings but I had no bee hives so Sally [Managing Director of New Guinea Fruit] saw that I was interested so she gave me a box which started me off," recalls Onano.

"I was excited when I got the box. I took it home, made a stand for my first hive. I bought my veil, smoker, hive tool. Every morning and afternoon, I would check that one hive. When I saw that there were many bees and were going to produce honey, I bought another box, wax, spray. I was excited about farming bees."

Onano's commitment and enthusiasm paid off and before long she was earning enough from her harvest to employ her husband, send her children to school and save for a more substantial farm.

"I am very happy with New Guinea Fruit Company because the company gave me that one box which I looked after and grew fast my bee farming. I earned a huge income from the sale of honey. I'm happy because that money helped me and my family."



Photo: Aurelie Marrier D'Unienville/Oxfam

Washing away poverty in Zimbabwe

Takudzwa Chihangya is passionate about getting water to the rural communities of her country, so she studied engineering and is now lead engineer for our WECARE program.

Being the only woman in a class of 15 men was challenging, says Taku, of her degree in agricultural engineering. "My grandmother came to say, 'Why are you choosing a male profession, what's wrong with you my granddaughter?' But because it was something I really wanted, I had to take up the challenge."

In her own words, Taku loves water. And more than that, she feels strongly about the impact that access to water has on the women of Zimbabwe.

"You'd find most women walk a long distance to fetch water, to do other activities that require water like laundry. They

have to walk a distance of 2km or more to fetch water and they'll actually do that maybe two or three times a day," she explains. "So on average they would spend four hours a day fetching water only."

Following her degree and an internship in water irrigation, Taku completed a master's degree in water resources engineering and is now lead engineer for our Women's Economic Empowerment and Care (WECARE) program.

"My role in this project is to see that the population or the communities that we are working in have access to clean water and that this water helps in the reduction of burden of unpaid care work," she says.

To do this, Taku oversees the design and implementation of a solar-powered water system, which pipes water from a deep borehole into rural villages that don't otherwise have water, including key facilities like schools and clinics.

"There was no water before [in clinics] so when patients would come they would have to bring their own water," says Taku.

Now, Taku is proudly witnessing the improved health, wellbeing and equality that stems from her work.

"When you do something out of love, out of passion, you'll definitely do a good job and achieve results."



Photos: Khaula Jamil/OxfamAUS

Rural resilience in the face of climate change

It's a tragic fact that many of the countries which contribute the least to global climate pollution are the ones that are being hit hardest by the climate crisis.

Pakistan is one such country. Ranked fifth on the Global Climate Risk Index for 2020, Pakistan is experiencing a dramatic increase in climate-fuelled disasters.

The Badin district — home to 1.8 million people — is particularly vulnerable to frequent floods and drought-like conditions. With increased water scarcity, changing rainfall patterns and land degradation, accessing clean water and growing food is increasingly difficult for the population, the majority of whom live rurally.

It's a situation that Hooran (pictured centre right) knows all too well. Growing up, Hooran's village had ample water, food and access to everything that the community needed, but this has changed dramatically.

"Because of climate change, we are suffering from unseasonal rains ... and sometimes the rains don't come at all," she says. "There was a cyclone and the floods destroyed all of the crops and farming land. We are running out of clean drinking water as well."

To address these issues, thanks to generous people like you, Hooran has now received leadership training on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction.

With support from the Australian NGO Cooperation Program, we are helping communities in Badin prepare for, adapt to and mitigate climate and disaster risks through our Building Resilient Communities in Badin program.

Focusing on small-scale farmers and women, young people and people with a disability, the program is providing communities with irrigation systems, and training on climate-resilient agricultural practices. Alternative sources of income are also being established for those who can't rely on farming.

Mehrunnisa (top right) and her husband Haji are farmers but their land has been barren since 2003. Now, as part of the program — run with local partner Laar Humanitarian and Development Programme (LHDP) — Mehrunnisa has received a high-efficiency irrigation system and training on innovative ways to grow crops in extreme conditions.



Finally, the family can grow enough vegetables to eat and sell.

“Before, when we were seeding the land, we just used to throw the seeds out across the land. Now, we are very careful. Every seed we plant we are very careful with where it goes, because we are also trying to grow multiple crops. We are growing bitter melon, ladyfinger (okra), chilis and lemons,” outlines the mother of six.

“Another change in our practices is that we have stopped using pesticides that you buy from the market. We are using natural alternatives like neem and cow dung. We are able to save money now because of this cost saving.”

Haji adds: “We hope everyone from our community gets the opportunity to practice this [training] because we have been able to lift ourselves out of trouble, and we would like for them to be able to do this, too.”

Kanwal (top left) has also received Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction training, as well as Women’s Leadership training. She says her confidence has grown immensely and the women of her village are feeling empowered by her training, also.

“After the second phase of the project with LHDP, we started forming community organisations and we elected women to be the presidents and general secretaries of these organisations,” she says.

“Before our organisations were formed there was a lack of equality between men and women. Now, there is equality and equal representation.”

Kanwal says the training has enabled her community to establish kitchen gardens, which will not only provide families with essential food but also address the malnutrition so many children have suffered from in recent years.

“The land available to all of us at the moment is not the best for growing seeds. So first we are preparing the land; we are digging it up, adding manure and mud and getting it ready for planting.

“LHDP and Oxfam have done a lot to support us. If these joint efforts continue, there is no limit to how much change can happen in our village.”



Oecusse, Timor-Leste: Mateus Elo proudly shows his vegetable garden, where he grows food to eat and sell with his wife, Sabina Foni. Around 80% of people in Timor-Leste rely on land and agriculture for their livelihood. Photo: Keith Parsons/OxfamAUS.

Taking down Goliath

Some powerful advocacy work in Timor-Leste has empowered communities to amplify their voices, claim their rights, and achieve an incredible land justice victory.

Colonial rule historically upsets traditional systems of land ownership. In the case of Timor-Leste, the country has been struggling since Portuguese and Indonesian occupation, when different land title systems were introduced, taking land from the people.

“So now we have a big challenge after independence on how to establish ownership of land,” says Oxfam Timor-Leste’s Research and Policy Analyst Mana (Mrs) Inês Martins.

It’s a crucial but challenging issue in the country.

Mana Inês explains: “80% of people are dependent on agriculture in Timor-Leste for their livelihoods. And 90% of people, especially in rural areas, manage land through customary traditional systems or tribes.”

Since independence, the Government of Timor-Leste and international partners have undertaken a range of interventions with the aim of strengthening the land administration system, but none have solved all the issues.

In 2014 two private companies, with no previous experience on land registration, were contracted to work across Timor-Leste and ensure all land was registered. But there were major problems with how they rolled out the project.

Some of the land registration processes the companies used contradicted national laws; were not set up to recognise community owned or customary land; and were not transparent.

The processes used also made some people more vulnerable, including customary groups which owned

customary land and those already in a vulnerable position such as orphans, persons with disabilities and women.

With only one name allowed to be included in registrations, joint customary or communal ownership could not be registered and couples were not able to submit a claim together, even though this is allowed by law. Land registration by women was subsequently very low.

So Oxfam and a network of local partner and community organisations called Rede Ba Rai — Timor-Leste’s National Land Network — published a report identifying weaknesses of the project, highlighting data and people’s stories, and calling for change.

“Based on the report recommendations, in January this year, Oxfam and the local partner network Rede Ba Rai met with the Legal Department of the Ministry of Justice. They said that the Minister of Justice decided to end the contract with the National Cadastre Process by July 2020,” reveals Mana Inês.

“The Ministry has said they want to work closely with Oxfam and the Rede Ba Rai Land Network on developing complimentary land laws in the future.”

The Oxfam team are delighted that the data and recommendations in the report helped the Ministry of Justice to review the project and accept its serious issues.

Now, with the Rede Ba Rai Land Network and Oxfam being asked to monitor and offer technical support to the Government’s plans for land registration in the future, the people of Timor-Leste — and particularly those most vulnerable — can be placed squarely at the centre of policy.

And with COVID-19 also affecting Timor-Leste, the Rede Ba Rai Land Network is now monitoring the effects of the pandemic on land rights and campaigning for no state evictions to happen during this time, while people are at their most vulnerable.



Photos: Pablo Tosco/Oxfam



Your essential support in action

This year marks five years since the escalation of the Yemen war, leaving more than 17 million people without access to clean water. However, with your help, we are changing this.

The Yemen civil war, between the Yemeni government and the Houthi armed movement, has so far forced more than 4 million people from their homes and has left nearly half the population in acute need of aid and protection. It's one of the world's worst-ever humanitarian crises.

Oxfam has been working in Yemen for 30 years but in July 2015 we scaled up our work to address the deepening crisis. In the last five years, supporters like you have helped provide essential support including clean water, sanitation, cash assistance and food vouchers to more than 3 million people. We have also launched cash for work programs and provided veterinary treatment for livestock.

Earlier this year, with your help, Oxfam Australia provided a further \$600,000 for increased water infrastructure work. And now, in the face of the pandemic, with local partners we are training hygiene awareness volunteers, distributing thousands of hygiene kits, and providing cash vouchers to displaced families.

Here, we share some incredible images of the situation, and the work you make possible, in Yemen.



Saif Abdulkareem waits with his family for the distribution of hygiene kits in a displaced persons camp. Oxfam has distributed thousands of kits in order to stop the spread of deadly diseases like cholera — and now coronavirus also.



Samiha Ali collects water in a jerry can at one of Oxfam's distribution points. Samiha fled with her children when the conflict reached Taiz Governorate and, without any possessions, sought refuge at Al Berrayer displaced persons camp.



Suad Hassan is happy to be able to collect water. Without water provided by Oxfam there would be no access to clean water at all in the Al Malika displaced persons camp where she now lives. The frontline is just half an hour away and, in late 2019, Oxfam had to suspend its activities several times due to the encroaching conflict.



Badr Abdulla, with Oxfam engineer Monther Alattar, collects water at Oxfam's desalination plant — powered by solar panels and wind energy — in the community of Khor Oromia. Badr is a young fisherman who fought in the war in 2015. He lives with his parents but many of his relatives have died during the conflict.



Rami Sulaiman, a factory worker and father of six who fled Ta'izz four years ago because of the war, showers outside his tent in the Al Mashqafa displaced persons camp.



Fatima heads to a fishing zone in her boat, with one of her sons. Fatima's father taught her to fish and now, thanks to Oxfam, she has been able to buy fishing equipment and can earn a living and support her family through fishing.



Photos: Rob Rickman/RAW Fiji

Community Made empowerment

Fiji is a country with deeply entrenched gender inequality but, thanks to your support, women are gaining independence and a voice in their communities and their homes.

For more than 60 years, Oxfam's mission has been to tackle poverty and inequality. And we have learnt that one of the most fundamental ways to do this is to empower women and girls.

When women and girls have access to education and an income, they're in a better position to make their own financial and personal decisions, take on leadership roles

and stand up to abuse. A woman with even a modest income can also free her family from extreme poverty. So Oxfam supports Rise Beyond the Reef (RBTR), a Fiji-based organisation to empower women in remote rural communities.

Founded in 2013, RBTR focuses on income-generating projects – as research and discussions with communities highlighted this was the most effective way to empower rural women.

"Arts and crafts production was trialled alongside experiments in floriculture and women's cooperative vegetable farms," says Program Director, Janet Lotawa. "The women earned more from the arts and crafts and more quickly, so our focus went there."

The resulting project – Community Made – not only brings women together to learn and share traditional craft-making skills; it also provides leadership and financial training, and helps the women sell their gorgeous artisan crafts.

Last year to increase earnings, Community Made took its crafts to the world, launching an online store that now reaches Australia and America.



A recent assessment of the program — which is the largest economic development program for rural remote women in Fiji — found that participants have increased confidence, skills and financial independence, enabling them to invest in their home, community, children’s education and also to save.

“You’re giving women an actual tool to leverage their voice and choice.” — Janet Lotawa

Nearly all respondents reported an improved relationship with their partners, greater awareness that violence of any form is unacceptable, and greater participation in community decision-making.

“You’re giving women an actual tool to leverage their voice and choice,” says Janet. And with that, overturning gender inequality.



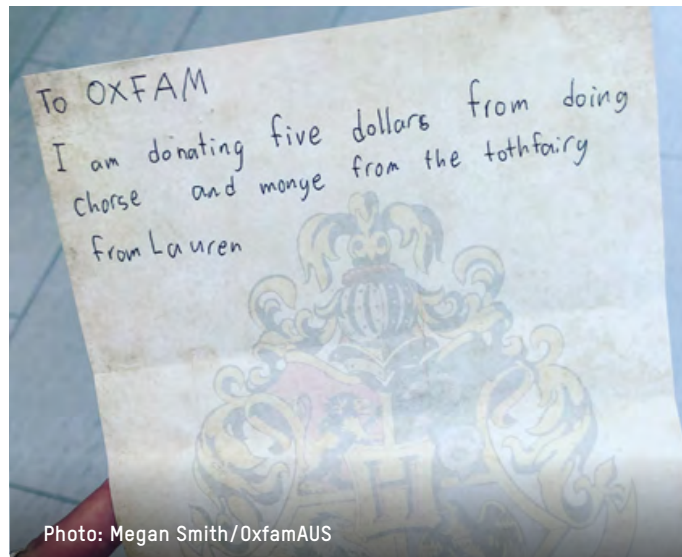
For more information and to buy Community Made products go to risebeyondthereef.org

Every dollar counts

At Oxfam, we feel a great sense of responsibility to generous donors like you, who make our work possible.

We get wonderful messages from our supporters and we treasure them all. They bolster us when we feel tackling poverty is a mountain too high to climb and we celebrate along with them when we feel we've made great leaps on the trail.

A message that arrived recently left a particularly strong impression on our hearts. Lauren, your amazing \$5 can give seeds to a family in Timor-Leste so they can eat, or a bucket to a family in Nepal so they can gather and store clean water. Our deepest thanks for your generosity.



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Photo: Aurelle Marrier d'Unleville/Oxfam



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Photo: Liz Schultink

Connecting with community

From his years teaching and presenting a radio show for Community Aid Abroad, to his current role as a councillor, Cliff Collinson has long cared for communities both near and far.

Retired schoolteacher Cliff Collinson is relishing his post-teaching life, finding meaning in work as a local government councillor, convenor of the Fremantle Oxfam Group and volunteer radio announcer, while also finding time to pursue his interests in bushwalking and bridge.

They're positions that give him an enviable connection with his community.

"Often when I am walking down the street, I am approached by people who have issues they want to raise or discuss. I greatly enjoy these interactions and feel it does increase my awareness."

Such a sense of social responsibility has played a role throughout Cliff's life. He became involved in Community Aid Abroad [now Oxfam] in 1980 and when the Fremantle Community Aid Abroad Group wanted to have their own show on local community radio, he volunteered to take on the role.

"I presented the Community Aid Abroad weekly program for eight years, in which time I met and interviewed many passionate and inspiring people doing great development work in very diverse places around the world.

"I learnt a lot from that experience," recalls Cliff. "It was a thrill for me when one of my guests who had been to my home — Jose Ramos Horta — won the Nobel Peace Prize."

Cliff has spent many holidays travelling in Africa and Asia and has witnessed a lot of diabolical poverty and terrible working conditions, he says.

"I was greatly moved by these experiences and resolved to do something about it.

"I was very aware that a lot of aid was inappropriate and I was attracted in the 1980's to Community Aid Abroad by the philosophy of working with communities rather than telling them what was best. A lot of aid was well intentioned but really was another form of cultural imperialism."

Cliff says he still feels closely aligned with Oxfam and this made it an easy decision to leave a gift in his Will. "Dollar for dollar I believe it is the one charity that will make the most difference in improving people's lives."

"It is a great feeling to know that when I drop off the perch, I can still contribute to making a real difference to improve the lives of the world's disadvantaged."



Melbourne, Australia: Sari Baird, General Counsel for Oxfam Australia, with Xena Jammias (R) at the CareerTrackers Gala Dinner. Photo: Heidi Niklas/OxfamAUS.

On track to a brilliant career

Not-for-profit organisation CareerTrackers supports Indigenous students by linking them with employers for paid internships. Thanks to you, we can support this great initiative.

In an executive team meeting at the Sydney offices of his employer of the time, CareerTrackers founder Michael Combs looked around the room and asked ‘Where are the Indigenous people?’.

His colleagues didn’t respond — they thought he was joking. So Michael decided something needed to be done and, in 2009, he founded CareerTrackers.

Since then, CareerTrackers has helped over 1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students gain industry experience and 95% of Alumni have secured full-time employment in their field within three months of graduation.

So far this year, Oxfam has supported two CareerTracker interns including Monash University Law and Arts student Xena Jammias, who told her adviser she’d like to do her CareerTrackers internship ‘somewhere like Oxfam’.

“Law students in the program tend to gravitate towards the corporate sector, but I asked my CareerTrackers adviser to find me a placement that would be more suited to my interests and passions as a human rights focused law student,” says Xena.

Xena initially heard about CareerTrackers through the Yulendj Center at Monash University in her first year and has been a part of the initiative ever since.

During her 12 weeks with Oxfam, Xena worked on several projects including a podcast for Australia Day, alongside Oxfam Australia board member and First People’s Committee member Desmond Rogers.

“He and I discussed our thoughts on Australia Day and what it meant for us, and what it would mean to change the date for the Indigenous community,” says Xena.

“But the biggest highlight of my internship,” she adds, “was getting to be a part of a wonderful group of people who were dedicated to their work and simply observing and learning from them every day.”

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Make your loved ones smile with a truly thoughtful gift. Whether it's a birthday, wedding, or just because, Oxfam Unwrapped has a range of gifts to suit everyone.

Best of all, each Oxfam Unwrapped gift can help transform lives, by providing food, clean water, or other life-saving essentials.

Your lucky recipient will receive a clever card explaining how their gift is helping others, and you'll both feel good knowing that you're tackling poverty together.



Photo: Artur Francisco/OxfamNZ

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