

VOICES

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TO YOU ...**

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PANDEMIC**

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OXFAM
Australia

Connections

with Lyn Morgain, Chief Executive

Above all, I hope this message finds you well in these trying times. I'm mindful that, as I write, many of us across the country are making big adjustments to our way of life. Victoria has been declared a State of Disaster and other states are grappling with the risks of the pandemic. It's certainly a strange time.

If you — like so many others — feel like your reserves are low, I hope you'll find some much-needed inspiration on the pages of this special edition of *Voices*. Despite the multiple challenges that are unfolding here in Australia and around the world, Oxfam's vital work tackling poverty goes on.

In fact, thanks to your compassion and generosity, our work is accelerated and expanded in these times of crisis. From providing water to vulnerable communities, to delivering remote learning solutions, to distributing masks and public health information, our response to the pandemic has been swift and smart. And we're far from finished. Right now, our teams are out there, on the ground, doing the hard yards to fight this insidious disease.

In this edition of *Voices*, you'll meet some of the many women, men and children around the globe who are surviving the crisis and thriving, thanks to you. From Bangladesh to Timor-Leste to Mozambique, your donations are having a positive impact across the world, and also here at home. May these tales of survival, triumph and resilience put a smile on your face, and reassure you that we really are all in this together.



Photo: M R Hasan/OxfamAUS

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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.

Cova Lima, Timor-Leste: Julita Nunes shows off her harvest of lentils. Julita is a member of an Oxfam Saving for Change group, which helps her save for her family's future.
Photo: Kate Bensen/OxfamAUS.

Cover image: Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh: Nur Jahan* wears a mask to protect herself from Covid-19. "I have lived in this refugee camp for almost three years," she says. "I know about the Coronavirus. I heard that we have to clean hands often with soap ... to prevent the disease." Photo: Fabeha Monir/Oxfam.
* Name changed to protect identity.



Thanks to you ...

We are tackling the pandemic, head-on. We've joined forces with 438 local partners in 66 countries to give more than 4 million people the water, food, hygiene training and emergency supplies they need to survive the health crisis.

As the pandemic unfolds, we aim to reach 14 million people worldwide.

We're speaking up for the millions of women, men and children in war-torn Yemen who are on the brink of famine, grappling with the worst humanitarian crisis of our time.

More than 65,000 of you have signed our petition calling on the Australian Government to stop selling arms to those waging war in Yemen, and to provide urgent food, medicine and life-saving aid.

More than 2,300 vulnerable farmers in Timor-Leste attended workshops and gained new skills to help them make a sustainable living despite the changing climate.



Northern Vietnam: Garment worker Minh* and her son Tuan Anh* pictured at home. Photo: Do Manh Cuong/OxfamAUS.
* Names changed to protect identities.

A win for women like Minh

With so many cities in lockdown, fashion retail has taken a big hit, and the women who make our clothes are feeling the pinch. But, together, we're demanding a better deal for women like Minh.

Minh (pictured above, right) works in a garment factory in Vietnam. It's grueling work and long hours. And no matter how hard she works, her poverty wages barely cover the cost of essentials for her family.

"I feel tired sometimes, but I keep trying harder every day," she says. "I sit on a bench [at work] ... sitting all day gives me back pain."

Minh is very proud of her son (pictured left). Like every loving mum, she wants the best for him. But it's hard to make ends meet with her income from the factory.

"I'm afraid that I cannot afford his education in the future ... If I earn little money, I cannot afford his daily meals and tuition fees."

Sadly, COVID-19 has made matters worse for the women who make our clothes.

When the pandemic hit, brands abruptly cancelled orders and refused to pay for clothes that were already made, pushing many millions of garment workers to the brink of extreme poverty.


But thanks to you, we quickly launched an action calling on big brands to ensure that women like Minh continue to receive their wages.

So far, six brands have either committed to pay for existing orders from garment factories or endorsed a statement from the International Labour Organization demanding action in the garment industry — or both. This means around 350,000 workers (280,000 of them women) will be paid for their work. The flow-on effect to these workers' families and children is estimated to reach about 1.5 million people.

For women like Minh, this is welcome relief in challenging times.

Will you urge big brands to lift their game? More than 6,000 people have already signed the petition to stand in solidarity with women like Minh.

Take action at www.oxfam.org.au/makethepay



Forrestfield, Australia: Brooke O'Donnell, Councillor for Kalamunda, stands at Hartfield Park, a historic location where the City of Kalamunda launched its first Reconciliation Action Plan 2019–2021. Photo: Reg Ramos/OxfamAUS.

A career high at the summit

Brooke O'Donnell was looking for inspiration in her career in local government when she applied for Oxfam Australia's Straight Talk program.

Brooke O'Donnell is a proud Palyku woman who lives in Perth, on Wadjuk Noongar land. The 36-year-old trained social worker has been a local Councillor in the City of Kalamunda for the past five years. She also works for the Department of Communities, "building systems to improve standards for our people," she says.

Two years ago, finding herself in need of inspiration and direction, Brooke attended our National Straight Talk Summit. Thanks to our supporters, the Straight Talk program gives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women the opportunity to come together and engage with Australia's political system.

"I was really stagnated and kind of needed that extra push, so I thought if I was successful in getting into the program, it would ... remind me what I was doing and where I am going," she explains.

"I think the biggest thing for Aboriginal women in politics is that sometimes you forget that you have such a valuable opportunity to make such a difference. And there is not many of us here in this realm so I need to be constantly thinking about that."

During the program, Brooke gained a deeper insight into Australian politics, realising "that Federal Government is something I'm really passionate about and perhaps somewhere I'd like to keep going to". She also felt empowered by meeting other First Nations women from Australia, Asia and the Pacific.

"It was amazing to see the amount of other Indigenous cultures. When I saw that there are far more commonalities with Aboriginal women and First Nations women from all around the world, I felt stronger and connected to women and to Aboriginal people in general."

For Aboriginal women and girls who are thinking of leadership opportunities, Brooke says: "Just give it a go. If [people] say you can't do it, you *can* definitely do it."

The 2021 Straight Talk program will be held in Canberra.

For more information email womensbusiness@oxfam.org.au or go to www.oxfam.org.au/straight-talk



Weathering the crisis

Our neighbours in Vanuatu are on the frontlines of the global climate crisis. But thanks to you, women like Yvette are armed with juicy solutions to win the battle.

The World Risk Index ranks Vanuatu as the most vulnerable country in the world to natural disasters, including earthquakes, cyclones and volcanic eruptions. And as sea levels rise, the impact of natural disasters is set to worsen for our Pacific neighbours.

Vanuatu's CO2 emissions are among the world's lowest. The ni-Vanuatu people have done so little to cause climate change but, sadly, they are the first to feel its devastating effects. That's why, with your support, we are helping women like Yvette defend their fragile farming livelihoods from the ravages of climate change.

With a helping hand from our partner Farm Support Association (FSA), Yvette's farming business is thriving. Since joining FSA, she has learnt several new farming techniques to help her cope with Vanuatu's increasingly harsh and volatile weather. One solution is as effective as it is sweet: pineapples.

Yvette says, "I have planted off-season pineapples that will be ready for harvest next year."

The pineapples fetch a good price at market. They can be grown year-round and are hardy enough to withstand the changing climate.

"If I had not joined FSA, my life would be very hard," she says.

"In the past, it was hard. When my kids came to me and asked for something that they needed or wanted, I didn't have anything to give them. I didn't have any money saved."

Now, Yvette has found sustainable ways to earn a living and lift her family out of poverty.

"I manage the income that I receive well," she says. "I use some for my kids' school fees and for myself at home. And

then I put some away as savings for myself. I help my children and my husband and I — there are 10 of us. Then I help other families as well ... so that's a total of around 21 people that I am supporting with the money."

"We are so happy with all the information that FSA is giving us and the techniques that we are using. I see that it has helped us a lot — so I just want to say thank you."



Photo: Artur Francisco/OxfamNZ

Want to join forces with Oxfam Australia to put pressure on governments to end climate damage? Sign our climate justice petition today.

Go to: www.oxfam.org.au/climate

A voice for the voiceless

Mkango Mines didn't expect anyone or anything to get in their way when they came to Dorothy's community to mine rare earth minerals. But Dorothy had other ideas.

"There was a river right behind the mountain where the mining activities are taking place now," Dorothy recalls. "We used to rely on the river for water."

"Mkango Mine blocked the river and water is no longer flowing towards us as it used to."

Dorothy and her neighbours didn't know how to stand up to the mining company — but now they do, thanks to you.

We partnered with Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA) in Malawi to develop a manual that explains Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), a right that allows Indigenous Peoples to give or withhold consent for a project that may affect them or their land.

"CEPA and Oxfam people came into this community and called for a meeting," Dorothy says. "They explained the FPIC booklets to us."

"We were told that FPIC means that one should not be forced into doing something that they do not want ... it is us who should choose the type of development we would want to see in our communities, without being forced, but in agreement. Posing questions for clarity to understand what would be happening before agreeing to it."

Once she learnt about her rights, Dorothy found a voice she never knew she had. "I was a person who had no confidence talking to my peers, but that has changed," she says.

Dorothy joined a community group that meets to discuss and negotiate mining projects on their land.

"In the past, the mine authorities were not available and despised us, but today we are partners because we are into FPIC programs and they understand them. This creates room for us to work together as one."

"We are thankful to CEPA and Oxfam for bringing us FPIC ... We are now enlightened."



Photo: Aurelie Marrier d'Unienville/OxfamAUS

“I was a person who had no confidence talking to my peers, but that has changed.”

— Dorothy, Malawi





"I feel much better and very happy because every week we are earning money."

— Xisto, Timor-Leste

Hatching success in Timor-Leste

Changing weather patterns in Timor-Leste make farming a fickle business. So Xisto has switched to raising chickens and making medicine — and the future looks bright.

Before Xisto and his wife Francisca started their new business, times were tough.

“The last few years have been a very difficult life,” Xisto says.

The increasingly unpredictable weather in Oecusse has left families like Xisto’s struggling to grow enough food to eat and sell.

“Here, in the rainy season, we only eat once a day — at midday,” Xisto explains.

A long wait for rains can decimate Xisto’s crops: “Last year, when we planted soya beans, they all died.”

“The dry season is a stressful time for us. We are farmers, so when we are resting, we are always thinking about what the next plan is.”

But 2018 was a major turning point in Xisto’s life: “The NGOs, Oxfam and Maneo, came to support me to learn how to raise chickens to sell and support my life more.

He also learnt how to make traditional medicine for animals, using natural ingredients like garlic, ginger and sugar cane.

“Now, if people have a sick animal,” he says, “they bring it to me so that I can give it some medicine and they pay me some money.”

“The NGOs have come and taught me a really good business. I can make medicine now to sell and I can also sell chickens to earn money. My wife takes the chickens to market to sell.”

“I feel much better and very happy because every week we are earning money.”

“The chicken business has been the biggest change in my life.

The business is able to help me in emergency times. I can sell eggs for our family needs as well.”

“I am not stressing anymore. I feel like I have a power.”

Xisto’s story is just one example of the power of your generosity. Thank you — you and Oxfam, tackling poverty together.



Photo: Kate Bensen/OxfamAUS



Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh: Abu Salem* wears a mask outside his tent in the sprawling Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar. Abu says, "How can we stay at our tent. It's very humid. I am living with 11 members of my family. We are asked to stay at home. I am very afraid of this virus. Everyone is wearing mask. I am wearing a mask too. But if I get infected by the disease, all my family members will be infected. This is what I fear most." Photo: Fabeha Monir/Oxfam.

* Name changed to protect identity.



Tackling the pandemic together

As COVID-19 continues to disrupt our way of life here in Australia, the pandemic is also wreaking untold havoc on many communities around the world. But when disaster strikes, Oxfam acts. And thanks to you, we're joining forces with local organisations across the globe — from Bolivia to Mozambique to Bangladesh — to stem the spread of the virus in places already besieged by poverty.

Here are some of the many practical and creative solutions we've deployed to empower vulnerable communities to defeat this new invisible enemy.



Photo: Fabeha Monir/Oxfam

Clean water in Bangladesh

Many years of responding to public health emergencies such as cholera and Ebola have taught us that water, sanitation and hygiene are vital in any effort to manage the spread of infection — and COVID-19 is no exception.

In Cox's Bazar, where more than 855,000 Rohingya live in extremely overcrowded conditions, we've stepped up our work on hygiene promotion and scaled up measures

like soap distribution and improved toilet facilities to help refugees. At the camp, we have installed contactless handwashing stations (pictured) to avoid transmission of the virus from touching soap. The soap dispensers are activated by a foot pedal and users must maintain a safe distance while queuing to wash their hands.



"I really like the way the teachers explain things."

— Benedita, Mozambique

Photo: Jeremias Benjamin/NANA

School via radio in Mozambique

With so many schools around the world closing and sending students home to quarantine, new forms of teaching have emerged. For 7th Grade student Benedita (pictured), the family radio has become her favourite teacher since a State of Emergency was declared in Mozambique.

"I was very unhappy when we were sent home without any prospect of returning again for the time being," Benedita says.

When schools closed in Mozambique, The Ministry of Education swiftly published learning resources online and partnered with a major TV channel to keep

students connected to education. But many children live outside the cities in Mozambique and cannot afford TV or internet access, so we partnered with local organisations to set up radio schools for kids like Benedita.

In total, 15 local radio stations are involved in the project, which delivers lessons to more than 1 million children.

Every day, Benedita tunes in with her brothers. She says, "I really like the way the teachers explain things and sometimes they use our local language when giving examples."

Hygiene kits in Yemen

As the coronavirus sweeps across the world, we are especially concerned about its impact in communities already afflicted with poverty. In Yemen, continuing conflict, airstrikes and restrictions on imports have left more than 24 million people – around 80% of the population – without enough food. Years of war and conflict have forced many people to leave their homes in search of safety.

We are distributing hygiene kits at camps for internally displaced people in Taiz, Yemen. The woman pictured is carrying her kit, which contains soap, detergent, mosquito net, sanitary pads, underwear, oral rehydration salts and plastic jerrycans, basin and jug.



Photo: Wael Algadi/Oxfam

Soap in Zimbabwe

Hand-washing with soap is critical in the fight against COVID-19, but millions of people in Zimbabwe don't have water or a place to wash their hands.

Our teams are working hard to improve access to clean water in vulnerable communities by repairing boreholes, chlorinating water supplies and trucking bulk water to public health facilities.

We're also delivering soap to households to help contain the disease. Kudakwashe (pictured) helped sort and arrange soap and aqua tabs for distribution in the capital, Harare.



Photo: Tavonga Chikwaya/Oxfam



Photo: Kiana Hayeri/Oxfam

Vital food in Afghanistan

Four decades of conflict in Afghanistan have forced millions to flee their homes, destroyed countless livelihoods and left many jobless. More than one third of the population — around 11.3 million people — don't have enough food. In these already stark conditions, COVID-19 presents a grave threat.

Together with local partners, we distributed food parcels to vulnerable people in Herat City (pictured). Each parcel contained a bag of flour, a bag of split peas and enough baby food to last for 15 days. Oxfam staff and volunteers tried to implement social distancing, but the large number of people needing food made this hard to enforce.

Pari Gul (second from left) received a food parcel for her family. She says, "I'm pregnant with my eighth child, with no job and no income. We can barely provide any food and put it on the *sofra** let alone getting [my husband's] medications.

"For the past three weeks, my children have been only eating sweetened green tea and dry bread. I don't have enough milk to breastfeed my [11-month-old]. I hope this little food package will bring blessings to our *sofra*."

* a table or cloth set for eating a meal



“My job is the soul of the family.”
— Raeda, Occupied Palestinian Territory

Photo: Rehaf Batniji/Oxfam

Wage subsidies in Gaza

As cities around the world have gone into lockdown, business has ground to a halt and countless workers like Raeda (pictured) have lost their jobs.

“My job is the soul of the family,” Raeda says as she prepares strawberries for freezing to be delivered to restaurants and hotels in Gaza.

“Due to the lockdown in early March because of coronavirus, all hotels and restaurants had shut down — they are the income source for the unit so the unit owner had to lay us off.”

We partnered with Start Fund to support the workers by covering their wages for 20 days to help the business recover after the lockdown.

“This assistance helped a lot to get us back to our work after more than two months with zero income,” Raeda says.

“In Gaza, the physical distancing is almost impossible; it is heavily populated area. And people will keep going out to earn their income whenever they can. We live under blockade and occupation, we do not have a system to compensate us if we lost our income.”

Public health flyers in Philippines

When a public health crisis is looming, information is vital. That's why we partnered with Initiatives for Dialogue and Empowerment through Alternative Legal Services (IDEALS) and the local government of Quezon City to produce 1 million flyers containing life-saving information about COVID-19 and coping with quarantine.

The flyers were included in relief packs that were given to vulnerable communities, while some were distributed in areas such as grocery stores, village halls and markets, like the one pictured.



Photo: Supplied by IDEALS

School via smart phone in Bolivia

Bolivia has had strict quarantine conditions since March, leaving more than 2 million children without schooling. So we partnered with the Hempel Foundation to train teachers in Riberalta —in the Bolivian Amazon —to give their students virtual lessons.

Teresa Quiroga (pictured) has just completed her online training and has started teaching her 4th Grade students from home.

"Before the training," she recalls, "I had no idea these tools even existed... This program trained us and gave us tools to resume the teaching and guide our students. I feel incredibly grateful and lucky to be able to do this."

Few students in Riberalta have computer access and stable Internet connection. But most families have a cell phone, so Teresa has learnt how to share materials, give lectures and tutor via cell phone.

"I can only hope that this opportunity will be given to more students to make sure they don't lose out too much because of the current crisis," Teresa says.

"And even when schools reopen, I think I will continue using these new tools as I see how the children are motivated by this new methodology and opportunities."

"I can only hope that this opportunity will be given to more students."

— Teresa, Bolivia

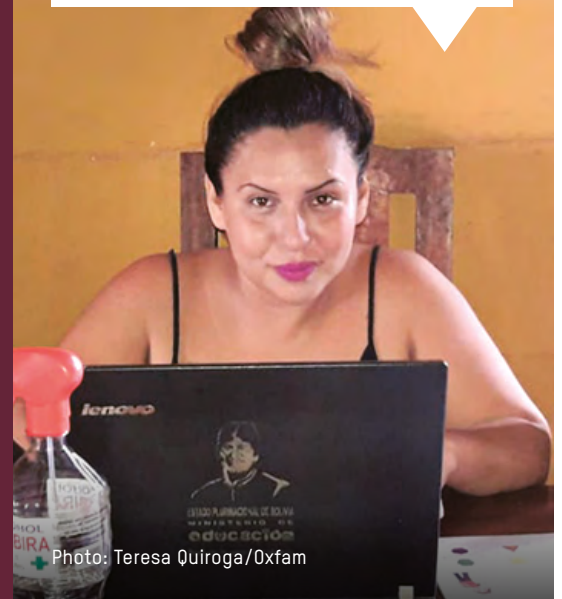


Photo: Teresa Quiroga/Oxfam

Online training in Jordan

With schools, workplaces and most public spaces in Jordan locked down, many people have extra time on their hands. So we've partnered with a local social enterprise, Leaders of Tomorrow, to encourage young Jordanians to use the time to upskill via an online educational and careers portal (called FORSA).

Before the pandemic, youth unemployment ranged from 40–48% in Jordan. So this project aims to help young people gain access to the labour market in an already dire context.

Project Manager Almudaffar Shoubaki says, “[Most] young people are at home right now and looking for meaningful things to do. For them, it means a lot to be able to access relevant, free online education, like the one we offer.”

FORSA has more than 1 million users who use the platform to learn new skills, find and apply for jobs, and find international education and internship opportunities.

Sana'a (pictured) is a new user who lost her job with an NGO when the corona crisis hit. Now she uses the platform to look for work while taking other courses to improve her skills.

“FORSA helps me through a difficult time by giving me something meaningful to do while I'm quarantined at home. I am learning new things that will hopefully help me get back to work quickly,” she says.

Will you join forces with Oxfam to beat this global health crisis?

Visit www.oxfam.org.au to support our Coronavirus Emergency Appeal.

“I am learning new things that will hopefully help me get back to work quickly.”

— Sana'a, Jordan



Photo: Oxfam



Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh: Laila Begum* sits inside her tent during lockdown, in a Rohingya refugee camp. Laila says, "My family received soaps from Oxfam. We also use toilet that was built by Oxfam. Now we come to know about a machine which is provided by the organisation to prevent Coronavirus. We are very afraid because every day we are hearing someone is getting infected by the virus. My husband and I are staying at home. We do not know what is waiting for us." Photo: Fabeha Monir/Oxfam.

* Name changed to protect identity

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Pursuit of a lifetime

A firm belief in social justice and the UN's Millennium Development Goals has inspired Gerard Lonnergan to bequest a gift in his Will.

"Education is the first step in the creation of equal opportunity."

— Gerard, Australia



Photo: Eddie Carbonell/OxfamAUS

If there is one quality that sums up Oxfam supporter Gerard Lonnergan, it's kindness.

Gerard has been motivated by the pursuit of social justice and equality for as long as he can remember. "Even as a young man, a teenager, I've always been interested in inequality," he says.

Ever since Gerard started his teaching career in 1975, he has sought out ways to pay it forward and balance the scales. Now retired, Gerard remains passionate about education. He sees learning as the key to empowerment: "I think education is the first step in the creation of equal opportunity."

Throughout his life, Gerard has taken this passion for education and equality beyond his teaching duties. Over the years, he has spent time supporting disadvantaged students, speaking up as a union rep and mentoring young learner drivers. He also supports microfinance projects in developing countries. Gerard's altruism is lifelong.

An abiding supporter of our work tackling poverty, Gerard says, "The Millennium Goals are important and you have to question how much progress we've made towards them. I think we are becoming more unequal and perhaps a little bit more selfish as a society — and I'm concerned by that."

Gerard's decision to leave a gift to Oxfam in his Will means that we can continue his pursuit of social justice and equality into the future.

Leaving a gift for Oxfam in your Will is a powerful way to make a difference.

Find out more at: www.oxfam.org.au/bequests

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