

VOICES

**THANKS
TO YOU**

PAGE 4

**CLIMATE
SPEAKERS'
TOUR**

PAGE 18



OXFAM
Australia



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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 they hold as the 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.

Cover photo: Canberra, Australia: Usaia Moli from the island of Moala, east of Fiji, was one of the speakers at Oxfam's Safe Climate, Equal Future speakers' tour.

Photo: Irene Dowdy/Oxfam.

Connections

with Lyn Morgain, Chief Executive

Faced with escalating conflicts around the world, climate-induced disasters and the growing wealth and inequality gaps we witness every day, we could be excused for feeling pessimistic. But I'm pleased to share this edition of *Voices* with you, an edition filled with stories of hope, triumph and optimism. Stories that you helped make happen. At Oxfam Australia we work hard every single day to 'unaccept' the inequality that leads to poverty, and we are so very grateful that you are part of this work.

In this edition, you'll meet Hodan, one of Oxfam's public health engineers in Somalia. Hodan is part of our emergency response, which is delivering life-saving fresh water and other essential supplies to people struggling with the worst drought in 40 years. You'll also meet Pastor Jimmy Joshua from Vanuatu, who is working hard to make sure his community understands how to prepare for disasters and how to reduce the risks they face. And we hear from Lourdes and Zacarias in Timor-Leste, who are accessing legal support and information to help them build a case to fight for their land.

All of this, and so much more, is made possible thanks to you – our dedicated supporters. I hope you enjoy reading about these remarkable people.

Letters to Lyn



Photo: Keith Parsons/OxfamAUS

Dear Lyn,

Thank you, Oxfam, for your phone call, keeping me updated on what is happening on the ground in Syria and Turkey. To be told it will be about four years before life will be back to 'normal' is just mind blowing. The media seems to have forgotten this tragedy. I am happy to donate more to help the people on the ground and the amazing staff of Oxfam. – Tash

Dear Lyn,

Thank you for the work you do and for sharing the stories to help us be informed about the breadth and depth of Oxfam's contributions. – Alma

Dear Lyn,

Keep up the good work. Every bit helps, however small/big. Be sure there are many people worldwide who share your commitment to a better world. Thank you. – Robert

Dear Lyn,

I love the image on the front [Voices October 2023] because I'm a keen gardener and producing great compost is good for the planet, as well as giving people like Shabana independence and security. Keep growing good things! – Suzette

Dear Lyn,

I have just read the latest edition of Voices. I am truly in awe of the individuals who feature in the stories from poor communities throughout the world. Their resilience, determination and support of their loved ones is inspiring. Their joy in their achievements is wonderful to see. Thank you for making it possible for me to assist them. I would love to present them with so much more. I too take pride in their progress towards greater happiness. – Chris



If you'd like to share your story, drop me a line at enquire@oxfam.or.au, scan this QR code or use the enclosed form and Reply Paid envelope.


Thanks to you ...

Thanks to you, people in Timor-Leste are able to fight to keep land that has belonged to their families for generations. Oxfam's partner organisations are helping them access legal support and information.

Oxfam is on the ground in Somalia, getting fresh water to communities battling the worst drought in 40 years. Our humanitarian response is delivering life-saving water, sanitation and hygiene supplies.

Somaliland, Somalia: Oxfam public health engineer Hodan. Read her story on page 9.
Photo: Pablo Tosco.





Dhaka, Bangladesh: Sabina* had to leave her children behind in her village when she moved to Dhaka to work in a garment factory. Photo: Fabeha Monir/Oxfam. *Name changed to protect identity.

Garment workers still fighting

Sabina has been working in the garment industry in Bangladesh for 12 years. Thanks to committed supporters like you, Oxfam's What She Makes campaign has seen conditions for workers like Sabina improve since it began in 2017. But there is still a long way to go and the women who make our clothes are still fighting to have manufacturers pay them a living wage.

Sabina's wage is just enough to pay her bills and buy essentials for herself and her parents, who care for her three children. This leaves little for emergencies.

"My elder son's name is Nawshad. He is disabled and cannot walk. My second son is 17 years old. I am unable to give his exam fees due to financial problems," Sabina said. "My younger son passed the S.S.C. exam but I couldn't admit him to college due to financial problems.

"Their happiness is my happiness. If they are happy, I will be happy. If they suffer, I will suffer as I am a mother."

While conditions have improved, life in the garment factories is still tough.

"They [factory owners] used to sack workers and beat and abuse them, but now they cannot. We have a union in our factory. When they are with us, no-one can abuse us."

Oxfam's What She Makes campaign encourages people to contact big clothing brands and demand they pay workers a living wage – enough to cover food, housing, healthcare and education for workers like Sabina. The campaign does not want people to boycott brands, as that means factory workers would have no income at all.

Sabina said she wanted to send a message to Oxfam supporters.

"We want to thank them, as they happily wear our clothes. They should stand beside us, allow us to work, and if we get a higher wage, we will be happy. If they give more work to Bangladesh, we can live peacefully. We want peace for them and us."

Stand with the women who make our clothes and demand brands pay a living wage. Sign the pledge: <https://www.oxfam.org.au/what-she-makes/>



Metinaro, Dili: Zacarias and Lourdes are protesting against the acquisition of their land, with help from Oxfam partners in Timor-Leste. Photo: Patrick Moran/Oxfam.

Fighting for their land

Lourdes is a volunteer preschool teacher and Zacarias is a farmer in Timor-Leste. They live on land that has been passed down over generations. Thanks to supporters like you, they have been able to access legal support and information to help them contest a dispute over their home.

The dispute involves the national enterprise, Timor Gap, which wants to acquire 86 hectares of land, including that of Lourdes and Zacarias, to build a fuel storage centre. Oxfam's local partners, Rede ba Rai and Juristas Advocasia, are assisting Lourdes and Zacarias to fight back and continue living on their land.

"This [is] inherited land. We use it to tend to our crops in the field, raise livestock, and these trees are important to us," Lourdes said. "The palm tree that we all climb are important for us because our lives depend on it. Its legs can be used for fences, the body can be used for building houses. The leaves can be used to build rooves, to cover it this way. Its fruit – the kids can cut it and sell."

Lourdes said all parts of the land were important to the local community.

"Today, I am very grateful for the people in Rede ba Rai who continue to accompany us, and I'm grateful for Oxfam who came here today, even though this place is simple. We truly appreciate it," Lourdes said.

"Hopefully with your help in acquiring our data, moving forward, hopefully we can win what we have been defending all this time because this land is very important to us. Which is why I truly appreciate this.

"I want to say thank you very much. Appreciate because you came here."



Erangorango, Vanuatu: Pastor Jimmy at work in his garden. Photo: Glen Pakoa/Oxfam.

Pastor Jimmy leads the way

Pastor Jimmy Joshua is a very busy man, and a trusted member of his community in Erangorango, Vanuatu.

As well as being the local pastor, Pastor Jimmy is a farmer, and thanks to the commitment of Oxfam supporters, he attended a training program on disaster risk reduction. He then became the chair of the Erangorango Community Disaster and Climate Change Committee. On top of all that, he established a primary school in his community, where the curriculum includes lessons on disaster risk reduction.

Disaster risk reduction is how we identify, assess and reduce the risk of disasters, and increase the resilience of communities to any disasters they might face. Climate change committees are designed to put this knowledge into the hands of local communities.

“I wanted to learn more about what the program was,” Pastor Jimmy said. “Because I knew that the sustainability of my farm and resiliency of my

community depend very much on DRR [disaster risk reduction].”

The Oxfam disaster risk reduction training covered how to develop a community profile, risk and evacuation map, historical profile, seasonal calendar and community response plan, and how to set up a climate change committee.

“Oxfam paved the way for us to secure sustainable livelihoods in order to preserve our farming lifestyle,” Pastor Jimmy said.

“Working with Oxfam has taught me a lot about community preparedness and making sure our community can respond to disasters and stay resilient. Through our continuous awareness ... I see that the mentality of members in my community has changed significantly when it comes to preparing for disasters.”

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Photo: Keith Parsons/Oxfam

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Somalia: Oxfam public health engineer Hodan, at work in Somalia. Photo: Ahmed Osman/Oxfam.

Bringing hope, thanks to you

The people of Somalia are in the grip of the worst drought in 40 years. Thanks to supporters like you, Oxfam is on the ground, working with local partner organisations to get fresh water to communities in need.

Hodan is one of our public health engineers with the Oxfam Somalia/Somaliland program. She is part of our team currently delivering a large-scale, life-saving humanitarian response prioritising water, sanitation and hygiene supplies.

“For me the most concerning thing is seeing a mother who is not able to feed her children and there is very little I can do to help that mother whose children have not had even one meal a day,” Hodan said. “The heartbreaking reality is that we are not able to help everyone due to lack of adequate funding.”

As well as our humanitarian response, the Oxfam team is working to develop long-term solutions. Hodan knows that none of this could happen without our loyal supporters.

“Through their [Oxfam supporters] support, we have reached out to thousands of people. Imagine if we had more support, we can do more,” Hodan said.

“My message for Oxfam supporters is to thank them for all you are doing to help here, but we need more support. It is sad that until now, many, and most especially children, are dying of hunger.

“As a water engineer, the biggest satisfaction comes out when you see the community benefitting from the water boreholes we have constructed or rehabilitated and knowing mothers no longer have to walk for hours just to get water,” she added.

“My wish is to help more mothers and children. My wish is for us to save lives.”



Yawuru (Broome), Australia: Obby joined the KAWC Roundtable in Broome in 2023. She is a proud Bunuba woman from Fitzroy Crossing. Photo: Aimee Han/Oxfam.

Combining culture with technology: Obby's story

Thanks to committed supporters like you, Oxfam proudly partners with the Kimberley Aboriginal Women's Council (KAWC). At the Council's November 2023 Roundtable in Broome, we met Obby Bedford, who kindly shared her story with us.

I am a Bunuba-speaking Miluwindi-clan woman from Fitzroy crossing. I grew up there, left for school, and now I'm back living there. I wanted to come back and learn my language and my culture properly.

The path that I chose to kind of get myself there is... I learned how to code, so computer programming. I know that we have so much analogue knowledge, it's already on cassettes or just other kind of digital audio, and then everything that's been written down as well. I knew that our next step forward was going to be to digitise our knowledge, just because of technology — that's the way that it's going.

That's why I chose to learn how to code, and it doesn't come naturally to me. It was really, really hard! But I kept doing it 'cause I wanted to go back.

I finished my course and then I got in touch with Bunuba Dawangarri, which is my language group's organisation. I got in touch with them and I said, "Hi, I want to turn one of our plant books into an app, so that we could all use it." Instead, they offered me a job to work as the apprentice to my grandmother. It was exactly what I wanted to do, even more so.

I'm kind of the bridge between tech and culture.

I'm passionate about language and about culture and about people, and empowering people — I think the way

to do that is through language and culture. I want more language and culture to be practised and for it to be widely spoken as well.

I was excited to be here [at KAWC Roundtable] to see what we wanted to do as a collective, to grow together, and what we all needed to grow together.

Women are the core of every single community, women are the pillars of every single community, women are the ones that get things done. If we are going to be honest and realistic, women are the caretakers and the caregivers and all that unpaid labour that goes unrecognised — without it — the communities would not run. That's why educating women is educating a whole community.

Queer voices are very important in women's issues. I feel like Christianity has torn apart our culture in that way, because we do have queer affirming language in Bunuba. Queerness and queer women is cultural and it is a part of Culture. I just think that it's a part of human diversity as well, and if we're not making space for everyone then we aren't truly making space for the community.

I feel like homophobia is rooted in misogyny, with that being the case we need men's sheds to actually teach, grow, and foster positive masculinity. I feel like tackling misogyny will ultimately solve homophobia as well.




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Leaving a gift in your Will can help challenge the systems that create inequality.

Likisa, Timor-Leste: Ilda and her husband Angelino, with their children. Ilda has always been a saver, even before joining the ROMANSA savings group, under Oxfam's Hakbi'it project. She is currently a leader in her group. Photo: Patrick Moran/Oxfam. Oxfam acknowledges the support of the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



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Growing cinnamon – and business – in Sri Lanka

Inequality and discrimination are widespread in Sri Lanka, and low-income levels mean people are struggling with high food prices. Thanks to supporters like you, Oxfam and our partners are working with hundreds of farmers and small business owners, like Seetha, to improve the agricultural sector and boost their income.

Seetha and her husband were excited to inherit a 50-year-old cinnamon cultivation from her parents in Sri Lanka. They saw great potential in the five-acre crop, but it was suffering from years of poor maintenance, pest damage and disease.

When Seetha was invited to join Oxfam's Resilient and Gender Inclusive Enterprise Systems (RIES) project, she learnt through training, coaching and exposure visits to other farms how to improve her cinnamon cultivation techniques.

"I am very happy to say that RIES project changed my life," Seetha said. "RIES helped me to be equipped with new technologies in soil conservation, cultivation management, and peeling, too. We did not miss any training given by [the project]," Seetha said.

Now, Seetha and her family are taking control of the entire cinnamon production process and have even built a peeling centre on their land. "Earlier, we did not know how to peel cinnamon and we hired a person from Ja-Ela area to peel it. We had to pay 50% to them, and we only received half of the harvest. Now, we know how to do it," Seetha said.

As a result, Seetha's profits are up and she now has her eyes set on becoming an entrepreneur – she has applied to register her own business.

"Thanks to the technical know-how and ... business development skills received from Oxfam I will go beyond my farming role soon."



Sri Lanka: Seetha proudly displays her cinnamon. Photo: Oxfam. Oxfam acknowledges the support of the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Cooking with biogas in Laos

In rural Laos, where there is limited or no electricity, communities often rely on a fire to cook meals inside their homes. But this process can be harmful: trapped smoke poses a risk to the family's health, and women and girls have to constantly collect firewood.

Thanks to our generous supporters, Oxfam was able to explore safe, renewable energy options in these remote communities through a biogas production pilot scheme, in partnership with Champassak University. The pilot raised the community's awareness of clean and renewable energy options — specifically on how to convert pig manure into biogas for cooking.

In collaboration with local pig farmers, Oxfam installed nine storage balloons to hold the biogas produced from pig manure. The project also developed a biogas usage handbook, highlighting

how raising pigs could be a livelihood opportunity as well as a source of renewable energy.

Each family in the pilot project produced around 90 to 120 cubic metres of biogas every month, equivalent to using 108 to 144 kilograms of firewood or charcoal, or 41 to 55 litres of fuel. Another benefit of using biogas is that it can save a family around 15 minutes every time they cook a meal.

The project is now exploring ways to scale up the successful pilot by using fixed-dome digesters, which last longer than biogas balloons.



Champasak province, Laos: Oxfam visits community users of biogas, from left: Ms Bounheuang (biogas user), Ms Odeth (Champasak University), Dr Vannanish (Champasak University), Mr Saneth Meas (Oxfam), Mr Salongxay (Champasak University). Photo: Mr Sengsulixay.

Committed to an equal world: Thank you, Paul

Paul Chorlton, a small-business owner from Western Australia, is one of Oxfam's most dedicated long-term supporters.

Back in 1994, Paul made his first donation to Oxfam when we were known as Community Aid Abroad. He chose to support Oxfam "primarily because they make a real difference".

Paul also likes Oxfam's model of partnering with local organisations. "I think this leads to better outcomes," he said. "I am a great believer in advocacy and this is another area that Oxfam is very strong in."

Since writing that first cheque for Oxfam nearly 30 years ago, Paul has continued to generously give his time, skills and donations to support our work.

"I have tried to be involved as much as I can in a more hands-on way," Paul said. "At one stage I negotiated with my employer and worked a four-day week and then used the extra day to volunteer at the Oxfam office in Western Australia.

"I was part of the WA State Committee for over 10 years and am now on the committee for Friends of Oxfam ... a group who, back in the 1970s, bought a building ... for Oxfam to use rent free as their office. It also rents out space to other non-profits at very much discounted rates."

Paul is a keen hiker and loves to travel, so it's no surprise that he has managed to merge his pastimes with his passion by participating in Oxfam's Trailwalker

event and visiting Oxfam projects in Indonesia after hiking Mt Rinjani.

"I have also been very fortunate in my travels to see the work of Oxfam in Guatemala, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Indonesia. It was amazing to see the difference that Oxfam makes first-hand."



Mt Rinjani, Indonesia: Paul combines his love of hiking with his commitment to Oxfam. Photo: Supplied.



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Palestinian Territory: Huwaida, who manages a shelter in the Gaza Strip, hugs her daughter.
Photo: Marwan Sawwaf/Alef MultiMedia/Oxfam.

Your donations in action

When conflict escalated in Israel and Gaza in October last year, Oxfam's generous supporters responded immediately.

Your compassion and commitment meant we could prepare humanitarian supplies and be ready to deliver them at short notice. In the weeks and months after fighting broke out, together we raised more than \$500,000 through our Gaza Crisis Appeal. Thank you.

The extensive destruction means that life-saving assistance will be needed in Gaza for months and years ahead. The effects of this crisis will be long-lasting, but with your commitment, Oxfam will continue working with our partners to support the people of Gaza.

Huwaida is a dedicated employee of Oxfam's partner organisation, the Culture and Free Thought Association,

where she manages 300 people. The intensity of the crisis has left her with little time to think of her loved ones who have been killed.

"I long for the opportunity to mourn those I've lost. I struggle to find a moment for sorrow," she said.

Huwaida had to evacuate Gaza when Israeli warplanes distributed leaflets telling residents in the north and central areas to seek refuge in the south.

"Having lost my husband and father in past wars, my sole hope now is not to lose any of my children."



Sydney, Australia (from left): Zedi, Lavenia and Usaia. Photo: Piers Haskard/Oxfam.

Climate Speakers' Tour

Three cities, 15 meetings with politicians, seven impactful events, and national news interviews – thanks to committed supporters like you.

The Safe Climate, Equal Future speakers' tour was held in September 2023. Grassroots climate activists and community leaders from Fiji and Solomon Islands addressed the question: What needs to be done for Australia and the world to step up to the plate and combat climate change in a just way?

Your generosity made it possible for Oxfam's inspirational Safe Climate, Equal Future campaign to bring three Pacific community leaders to Australia to meet with government ministers, Australian climate advocates and the public across events in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra.

The speakers, Usaia Moli, Lavenia Yasikula Naivalu and Zedi Vahia Devesi, have all been personally impacted by cyclones, droughts and rising sea levels. They are determined to ensure that climate-vulnerable countries and communities are not forgotten in regional and global climate action.

Their message was clear: their communities are already facing dangerous climate change impacts like food and water shortages, unrelenting disasters, and the devastating loss of homelands, traditions and identity through no fault of their own. The speakers called on political leaders to tax big polluters and channel the revenue into preparedness and recovery efforts for Pacific Island nations.



My work is focused on leaving the world better than I found it, not only for my children but for all children. I want to show them that if you have the knowledge and power, you must take action, not just be a bystander. And that's all I ask of Australia's political leaders.

Sydney, Australia: Usaia speaks in Sydney as part of the the Safe Climate, Equal Future speakers' tour. Photo: Piers Haskard/Oxfam.

Usaia

Usaia is from the island of Moala in the Lau Group, east of Fiji. His village, Cakova, has already been relocated due to the impacts of climate change, and neighbouring Vunuku faces a similar fate. As a volunteer disaster responder and subsistence farmer, Usaia has witnessed first-hand the devastation caused by climate-induced disasters and changes, and he is determined to prevent similar things happening in other rural communities.

"I want the world to know what it's like to walk knee-deep in what once was a sandy beach. What it's like to consider category three or four cyclones as a normal thing, and when every development in our community is centred around disaster.

It takes a lot of political will. We are resilient people, but at times we need the support of those in the

bigger countries that have a lot more to contribute because we are taking the brunt of what climate change is.

Until I can see this materialising into programs in our community, then I know that this country actually take this very seriously. And, you know, until then, we'll keep knocking, we'll keep fighting and we will keep telling our stories until someone will hear us.

With little to no access to services and information, climate justice is to us, just empty words. Until policies are translated to services, to access, to dignity of our remote island communities, climate justice will remain just that – empty words."



Sydney, Australia: Zedi tells the audience about the impact climate change is having on his home. Photo: Piers Haskard/Oxfam.



Canberra, Australia: Member for Cooper and the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Ged Kearney, discusses key emerging climate issues with Lavenia, Usaia and Zedi in Parliament House. Photo: Irene Dowdy/Oxfam.

Zedi

Zedi is a passionate advocate for climate action. He is from Solomon Islands and has a strong connection to two communities, Sulufou in Malaita province and Tanga in the Reef Islands of Temotu province. Both have been significantly impacted by climate change. These impacts hold personal significance for Zedi, as some of his relatives have already begun resettling on the mainland. Motivated by these experiences and the urgency of the climate crisis, Zedi volunteers and works on several climate change programs. He is particularly passionate about engaging children in climate change advocacy in Solomon Islands.

“In the places that we came from, we don’t have big buildings, big factories. No. Only thing we have is our natural resources. We depend mostly on these things around us for food. It scares me because we’re not even contributing to climate change, we’re not even contributing to greenhouse gas emissions so of

course they have a responsibility to help the people of the Pacific in their struggles, because we are the first-hand people who’s gonna face this type of problems. If Australia were to think of us, we are one Pacific. We share the same ocean. Every single kid in the Solomon Islands, when they say, Australia, they think of Australians as bigger sisters of the regions that we come from. And we look to them for our help, and we look to them as a source of our voices to be heard. But right now, Australia is being ignorant towards us and that’s very saddening.

Climate justice for me is just giving back to the communities who’ve been suffering from big infrastructures and developments and fossil fuels overseas. The right to live again and to properly practice their traditions as indigenous peoples of Solomon Islands because they don’t deserve to be living in a place where it’s not liveable.”



Sydney, Australia: Lavenia calls for justice during the climate speakers' tour.
Photo: Piers Haskard/Oxfam.



Canberra, Australia: Oxfam staff members with the speakers in Parliament House.
Photo: Irene Dowdy/Oxfam.

Lavenia

Lavenia is an activist from the district of Nacula in Yasawa, Fiji, a region profoundly affected by climate change. As a resident of the small island community, Lavenia has personally experienced the devastating consequences of cyclones, droughts and rising sea levels. Since the destructive Cyclone Winston hit in 2016, Lavenia has been actively engaged in grassroots, national and international efforts to address climate change. Through her activism, she calls for greater global efforts to combat the impacts of climate change, especially in vulnerable island communities like hers.

“My main focus when I’m sitting with senior politicians and parliamentarians is, I want to bring my story and make them feel what is happening back

home. Trying to make them understand, coming from a community lead and from the grassroots level and bringing my story here to Australia. And of course, when we are fighting, we are supposed to be fighting together for climate justice.

When we are going through the devastating effects of climate change, why do we deserve it? I believe the big nations are the ones who are responsible for this, and they are the ones who should be giving us our fair share of climate financing.”



Canberra, Australia: Lavenia, Usaia and Zedi meet with Peter Khalil, Member for Wills.
Photo: Eva Otsing/Oxfam.

Those who have benefited the most from the mining and burning of fossil fuels – the big polluters – need to pay for all the loss and damage they have caused communities.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Oxfam Australia is joining activists from around the world, calling on political leaders to tax the biggest climate polluters and use this revenue to help communities recover from the loss and damage caused by the climate disaster.

We are also in a unique position, holding a place on the committee that is formulating the new Loss and Damage Fund, agreed to at COP28 in December last year. Our years of advocacy and campaigning have cemented our position as experts in this field, and we are playing a key role internationally in the creation and development of the Fund. The

Australian Government is listening to Oxfam, and we are determined to have our voice, your voices, and most importantly the voices of the people we work for around the world front and centre during negotiations.



Scan the QR code to watch this thought-provoking video as Lavenia, Usaia and Zedi delve into the crucial question: How can Australia and the world take meaningful steps to combat climate change with fairness in mind?



Scan this QR code to hear from our speakers.



The future is equal



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Voices is printed with vegetable inks on an unbleached, uncoated paper that is made from 100% recycled post-consumer waste and is carbon neutral.

Yawuru (Broome), Australia: The Kimberley Aboriginal Women's Council held a Roundtable in Broome in November 2023. Photo: Aimee Han/Oxfam.