



RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY— IN AN EMERGENCY

When you're in a pandemic, what do you do when another crisis hits? Oxfam partners with local experts for the fastest and most efficient ways to help people.

BY CHRIS HUFSTADER | SPRING 2021

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world in March 2020, Oxfam bolstered its ongoing programs to make them safe, while shifting limited resources to meet additional needs and added expenses. But what happens when there's a crisis on top of a crisis—conflict, hurricanes, floods, or locusts?

The COVID-19 crisis has underscored the importance of something we already knew: Investing in local partner organizations can save lives in emergencies. When disasters strike, local organizations can respond quickly and effectively, thanks to the knowledge these organizations bring to the task. Oxfam helps ensure they have the technical expertise and funding they need to get the job done.

Here are just a few examples.

CYCLONE IN THE BAY OF BENGAL

Last May, cyclone Amphan blasted north and east up the Bay of Bengal, along the coast of India and into Bangladesh. Oxfam in India and Bangladesh responded with assistance for people along the coast who had to evacuate their homes in the middle of the pandemic.

As Amphan approached, Oxfam's partner Shushilan set to work disinfecting cyclone shelters, and when families arrived, Shushilan distributed soap and hand sanitizer to them and made sure everyone knew the importance of wearing masks. The cyclone pounded the coast, leaving in its wake floods and massive damage to homes. One of the most life-threatening outcomes: Water supplies were contaminated with salt. But within a day of the

storm, Shushilan was able to begin distributing clean drinking water to affected communities.

Shushilan and Oxfam have worked together since 2010. "Oxfam taught us about how to provide water and sanitation in emergencies, and how to promote safe hygiene," says Shushilan Director Mostafa Nuruzzaman. Now, Shushilan is working in the crowded Rohingya refugee camps, in charge of providing water and sanitation, and promoting safe hygiene for more than 28,000 people.

EXPLOSION IN BEIRUT

On August 4, a warehouse storing ammonium nitrate exploded in the Lebanese port of Beirut. In the blink of an eye, the homes of 30,000 people were destroyed,



and 200 people died. Thousands of businesses near the port were severely damaged. The costs of rebuilding soared: New windows and doors became unaffordable for most people as the explosion worsened the financial crisis in Lebanon.

To lead its response, Oxfam immediately turned to well-known civil society groups in Beirut, including Samidoun, which supervised repairs to homes and deployed a team of civil engineers to ensure the work was handled properly.

Bahjat al-Sheikh Mousa, 70, who lives in a building repaired by Samidoun volunteers, says he was grateful for the assistance, because "our government didn't even bother to check on the affected people."

Oxfam is working with 11 organizations in Beirut to distribute food and cash, and to provide psychosocial support, particularly to women survivors of domestic violence. Oxfam's partners assisted 9,000 people within six months of the explosion.

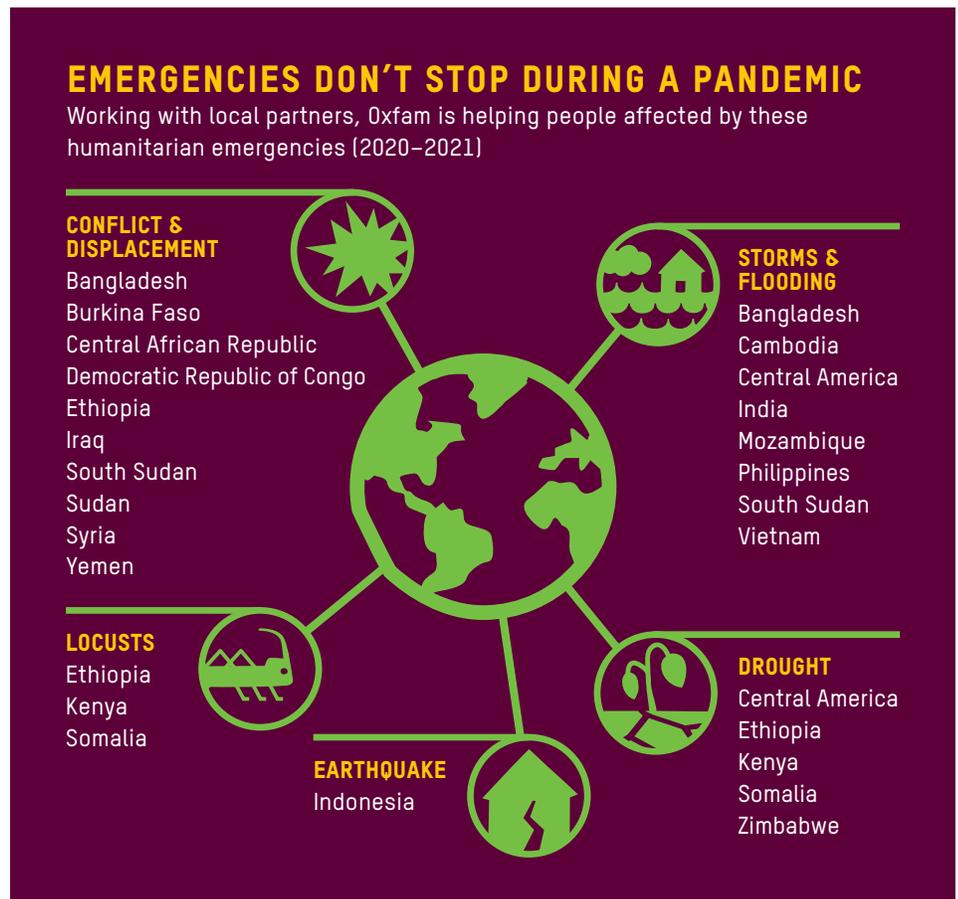
LOCUSTS IN KENYA

When COVID-19 threatened Kenya last March, the impact on the arid northern part of the country was severe as people were recovering from a long drought. Then desert locusts invaded the grasslands and farms, and the situation became more dire. The locusts ate everything in their path, according to Ahmed Abdi, director of Arid Lands Development Focus (ALDEF), Oxfam's partner in the region.

ALDEF staff quickly organized 300 community monitors and gave them smartphones with a mobile app to record locust activity and report it to the government so officials could call in aircraft to spray pesticides. "Communities are the ones who know where the locusts are; government agencies can't be everywhere," says Abdi.

In the meantime, Oxfam, ALDEF, and other groups distributed cash (between \$30 and \$48 per family per month for two months) to 8,000 people in the northern arid areas, to help farmers and livestock herders buy food, soap, and other crucial items they need to survive the pandemic.

Includes reporting by Elizabeth Stevens (Bangladesh) and Kelsey-Rae Taylor (Kenya).



DO ONE MORE THING TODAY

Visit Oxfam's Local Humanitarian Leadership website to learn about Oxfam's partnerships with organizations committed to reducing the risks of emergencies, and sign up for an email newsletter for more information.

oxfam.org/LocalLeadershipImpact



OXFAM

OXFAM AMERICA
226 CAUSEWAY STREET, 5TH FLOOR
BOSTON, MA 02114-2206
(800) 77-OXFAM
oxfamamerica.org

Oxfam is a global organization working to end the injustice of poverty. We help people build better futures for themselves, hold the powerful accountable, and save lives in disasters. Our mission is to tackle the root causes of poverty and create lasting solutions. Join us: oxfamamerica.org

© 2021 Oxfam America Inc. All rights reserved. OXFAM is a registered trademark of Oxfam America Inc., and the Oxfam logo is a registered trademark of Stichting Oxfam International. None of the trademarks may be used without permission of the owner. ♻️ Printed on 100 percent postconsumer recycled paper. 2102021