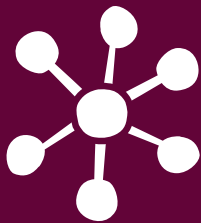


# TOP TIPS



Partnerships &  
Local Humanitarian  
Leadership (LHL)  
in Oxfam Humanitarian  
Programming



**OXFAM**

# WHAT CAN OXFAM HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMES AND PARTNERSHIPS DO TO ENABLE LHL?

These Top Tips can guide you in how to improve the quality of Partnerships and enable Local Humanitarian Leadership. They unpack the Partnerships & LHL dimension of Oxfam's Humanitarian Approach

## Questions? More information? Want to share your experience?

We would love to hear from you! We invite you to share your experiences, insights and recommendations and discuss further!

You can get in touch with the GHT Partnerships & LHL Team through [GHT\\_Partnerships\\_LHL@oxfam.org](mailto:GHT_Partnerships_LHL@oxfam.org)



### TOP TIPS 1

#### PRINCIPLED & EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

The Partnering and Programme Management Cycles



### TOP TIPS 2

#### INCREASED QUANTITY & QUALITY OF FUNDING FOR LOCALLY LED HUMANITARIAN WORK



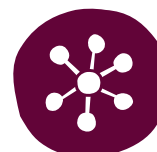
### TOP TIPS 3

#### STRENGTHENING LOCAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE CAPACITIES



### TOP TIPS 4

#### PARTICIPATION OF CRISIS-AFFECTED PEOPLE



### TOP TIPS 5

#### INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE COORDINATION & COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS



### TOP TIPS 6

#### VISIBILITY OF LOCAL ACTORS



### TOP TIPS 7

#### INFLUENCING & SHAPING THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

## TOP TIPS 1



# PRINCIPLED & EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

## How can Oxfam ensure principled, equitable and effective partnering for increased LHL?

Partnerships with local and national actors are essential in humanitarian work, and they can be a strong enabler of programmes' relevance, scale, access and quality. Principled, equitable and effective partnering is essential to LHL as it recognises and increases power of local and national actors; it also contributes to addressing power imbalances inherent to the humanitarian system. However, experience shows that many so-called 'partnerships' are in reality 'subcontracting' relationships. In Oxfam we understand 'partnership' as principled, diverse and effective collaborative relations between two or more actors, aimed at addressing key humanitarian challenges. Humanitarian programming that is enabling of LHL will require stronger emphasis on: complementarity, mutual respect, sharing of risks and benefits, brokering collaborations between diverse actors, networks at community, local and national levels.

### RELEVANT LOCALISATION COMMITMENTS

- **Charter4Change:** direct funding, partnership, transparency, equality and support commitments
- **Grand Bargain:** workstream 2 – Localisation, commitments 1 and 2
- **CHS:** Commitments 3 and 6
- **Principles of Partnership** adopted by the Global Humanitarian Platform
- Oxfam's **GBV Call to Action** commitments
- Oxfam's **Commitment to Change**

### GOOD PRACTICES & SUCCESS INDICATORS CHECKLIST

- ✓ Together with the humanitarian programme cycle management approach, adopt the **partnering cycle** as the key quality partnership management framework: it means dedicating specific attention to partnering processes; it also implies collective action in needs assessment, project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation & learning.
- ✓ Ensure **principled collaborative attitude, mind-set and skills in action for partnering:** such as mutual respect and understanding; general eagerness and willingness to learn from partners; openness in communication, transparency, courage and dialogue to explore risks and overcome challenges.
- ✓ Work on the basis of **complementarity:** by identifying different partners added value; by ensuring partners are being recognised by and connected with other international actors; by respecting and building on existing local capacities; by adopting a brokering or enabling role of existing partners, networks and actors.
- ✓ Ensure that **longer-term strategic partnerships** are explored and / or in place, beyond projects and short term funding, by: supporting local / national partner's organisational capacities and interests, beyond projects; embedding strategic collaborations into Oxfam's humanitarian response strategies, exit strategies, and country programme strategies.

### USING THE PARTNERING CYCLE ALONGSIDE THE PROGRAMME CYCLE

In light of Oxfam's Humanitarian Approach, we recommend utilising the partnering cycle as a core quality standard. This will help to navigate (complex) partnering processes whilst improving the quality of partnerships (and its projects). The partnering cycle also promotes inclusive and diverse participation of local actors along the project cycle management. Further, it helps Oxfam adapt into new roles, collaborative action and mindset, needed for enhanced LHL.

See [page 4](#).



## USING THE PARTNERING CYCLE ALONGSIDE THE PROGRAMME CYCLE

This graph illustrates how the four phases of the **PARTNERING CYCLE** and its activities can work together with the five phases of the Humanitarian **PROGRAMME CYCLE**.

### Sharing knowledge and experience ► Scaling and increasing impact ► Moving on

- Manage closure or moving on of partnering process(es) collaboratively
- Ensure partnership outcomes can be sustained, embedded, transferred or scaled (exit strategy)
- Evaluate partnership results & added value to programmes and to LHL
- Learn, share, celebrate (!) partnership story

### Revisiting & revising of the project and the partnership ► Reviewing efficiency and value of the partnership ► Measuring the partnership's results

- Co-design & co-implement monitoring approaches with partners, including the partnership review process (through RTRs, evaluations, participatory partnership peer review) – adapt appropriately
- Ensure that feedback & complaints mechanisms are aligned with Principles of Partnership, Grand Bargain and Charter4Change commitments
- Promote learning & reflective practice: take stock, tell the partnering story...

### Scoping needs and options ► Identifying potential partners ► Build relationships ► Mapping and planning

- Recognize and map existing local capacities
- Ensure that local organisations are part of needs assessments
- Enable local organisations to self assess their capacities needs
- Oxfam and (potential) partners joint evaluation of complementarity, added value, risks
- Avoid purely formalistic and unnecessary partner's due diligence assessments

### Mapping and planning

- Strive for transparent and participatory project design and partnering process
- Discuss and embed the key values relevant for partnering & project
- Co-create: projects, emergency response strategies, preparedness plans, exit strategies

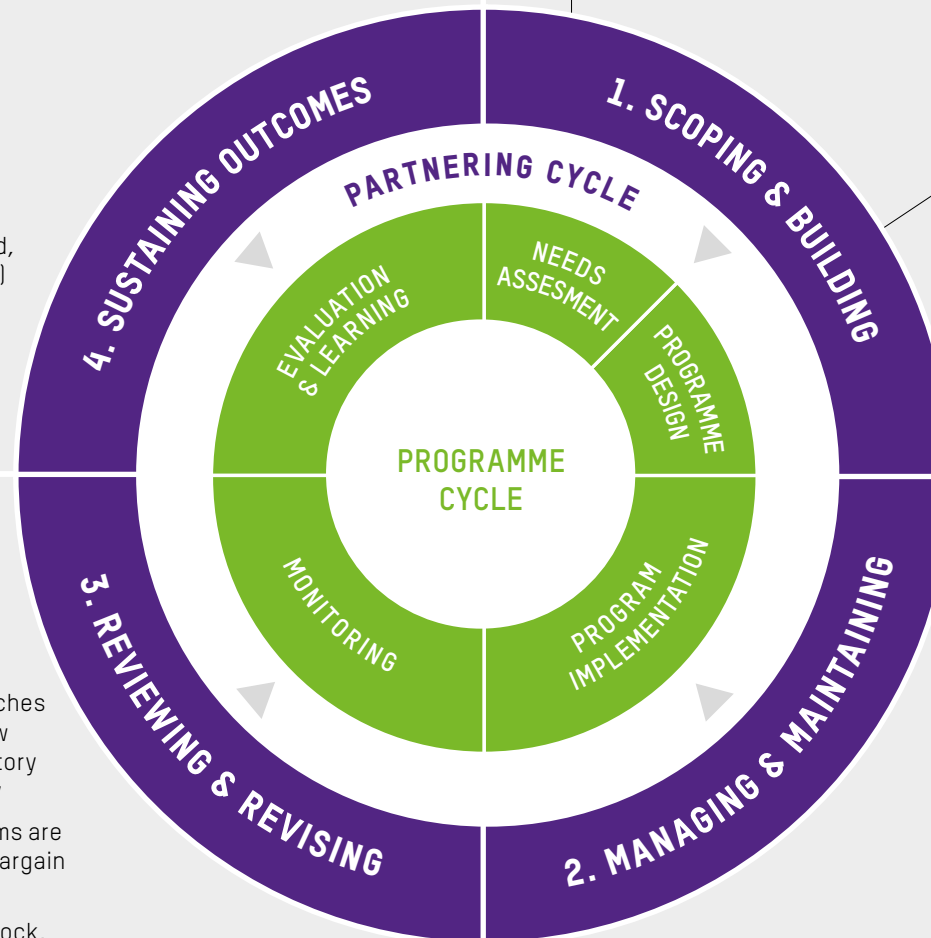
### Agreeing to partner

Ensure that formal partnerships agreements:

- reflect the principles relevant to that partnership
- outline clear roles, responsibilities
- outline of the systems in place for reporting, communication, decision-making, collaboration, whistle-blowing

### Governance and structures ► Deepening Engagement ► Delivering projects

- Strive for effective, principled, equitable partnership management alongside project management
- Ensure that clear and inclusive decision-making processes in place and followed
- Ensure collaborative skills, effective communication and business support systems enhance the partnership (not only project delivery!)



The *partnering cycle* copyright: The Partnering Initiative

## TOP TIPS 2



# INCREASED QUANTITY & QUALITY FUNDING FOR LOCALLY-LED HUMANITARIAN WORK

What type of funding support needs to be in place to ensure leadership by local actors?

Funding is a key element in partnership dynamics and in enabling local humanitarian leadership. If Oxfam is the major financial donor / international intermediary in a partnership with local and national organisations, it needs to ensure that its financial power is supportive of local partners' capacities to operate, to strengthen their humanitarian response capacities and to sustain themselves beyond the project implementation period.

### RELEVANT LOCALISATION COMMITMENTS

- **Charter4Change:** direct funding, partnership, transparency, equality and support commitments
- **Grand Bargain:** workstream 2 – Localisation, commitments 1, 2 and 4
- Oxfam's [GBV Call to Action](#) commitments
- Oxfam's [Commitment to Change](#)
- Oxfam's [Commitment on Meaningful Refugee Participation](#) - [Global Refugee Forum](#) | [Global Refugee Led Network](#)

### GOOD PRACTICES & SUCCESS INDICATORS CHECKLIST

- ✓ **Quantity funding:** share a minimum 25% of funding with partners.
- ✓ **Quality funding:** Quality funding as part of humanitarian projects and beyond includes:
  - unrestricted funds for local/national actors as specific budget lines.
  - overhead/core costs for local/national actors.
  - funding for mutually identified institutional/organisational development and capacity strengthening of local/national actors.
  - support to quality project implementation.
  - provision of tangible assets for local/national actors.
  - specific budget lines to fund local partner's (self-identified) support costs, including security-related needs.
  - multi-year funding approaches (not only from humanitarian funding).
- ✓ **Budget transparency:** budgets are co-designed; Oxfam budgets and donor requirements are transparently shared in project-based partnerships.
- ✓ **Local actors' access to flexible humanitarian funds:** Oxfam supports funding to local actors, including local-led humanitarian grants facilities, pooled funds and co-managed funds.
- ✓ **Oxfam brokers direct contact between local actors and donors:** including, participation at funding meetings, local/national actors' concepts submitted directly to donors, or local/national actors lead consortia instead of Oxfam.
- ✓ **No additional compliance conditions added than those imposed by donor(s):** project-based partnership contracts do not add constraints and restrictions beyond those imposed by donor(s). Oxfam makes the case for greater flexibility with the donor if so required.

## TOP TIPS 3



# STRENGTHENING LOCAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE CAPACITIES

How can Oxfam build on and complement existing local and national capacity, and reinforce local/national capacities when needed?

Humanitarian responses take place within a local/national capacity context, with government duty bearers, civil society organisations and other actors rooted within existing cultural knowledge systems and relationships. Traditional 'capacity assessments' tend to focus on risk or capacity gaps, instead of focusing on complementarity and reinforcing existing local capacity. Oxfam teams play a catalysing role in identifying, mobilizing, and building on local capacity in humanitarian work, and where needed, investing in local actors to become ever more robust organisations that can play an increased and more prominent role in humanitarian response in their contexts.

## RELEVANT LOCALISATION COMMITMENTS

- **Charter4Change:** direct funding, partnership and support commitments
- **Grand Bargain:** workstream 2 – Localisation, commitment 1
- **CHS:** Commitments 3 and 6
- Oxfam's **GBV Call to Action** commitments
- Oxfam's **Commitment to Change**

## GOOD PRACTICES & SUCCESS INDICATORS CHECKLIST

- ✓ **Understanding local humanitarian system capacity** as part of early context assessment activities: include a (rapid) mapping of existing actors, local capacities, and gaps that need to be addressed. Dedicated attention to be given to WRO's existing capacities, resources and networks.
- ✓ **Ensure local actors/partners determine capacity sharing needs and approaches:** capacity sharing, objectives and activities are demand led, based on (self-)assessment of current capacity and gaps (in organisations, individuals or collaborations) related to the topic/activity. Capacity assessments should be reciprocal to identify capacity gaps of both international and local actors, and come hand in hand with the investment and commitment to addressing the gaps identified.
- ✓ **Invest in sustainable capacity (organisational and institutional)** that contributes to longer-term growth of the humanitarian capacity at the sub-national (or national) level, such as:
  - Diverse capacity enhancement approaches of Oxfam partners & broader local ecosystem's capacities: learning-by-doing, sharing learning & capacities initiatives, seconding Oxfam experts into partners' operations; mentoring or supporting national surge initiatives;
  - Various partnering approaches: beyond a particular response project, with a network or consortium of diverse local actors;
  - Financial resources budgeted in projects and partnership agreements: including for longer-term investments, earmarking an explicit % of budgets and/or specific funds.
  - Prevent recruiting partners' staff to Oxfam's response teams, in order to not undermine local capacity.
- ✓ **Define transition or 'moving on' options early on:** being intentional about changing to advisory, backstopping or brokering roles as part of Oxfam's, partnering and capacity strengthening journeys.

## TOP TIPS 4



# PARTICIPATION OF CRISIS- AFFECTED PEOPLE

How can Oxfam follow the lead of crisis affected people, ensure participation in decision-making and work together as partners in humanitarian programming?

Participation of crisis-affected people in programme and partnership processes is part of Oxfam's Humanitarian approach. It is also a core component in local humanitarian leadership: if aid decision-making is to be inclusive, and put *affected people at the centre*, power, resources and accountability need to involve strong community engagement and participation. Transformative participation refers to crisis-affected people being in the lead and/or working as partners with aid actors in making decisions that concern them. The agency of people affected by crisis and / or concerned by humanitarian aid programmes, is not something that it is 'given' to crisis-affected people, it is something inherent to all people, which aid actors opt to engage or disregard.

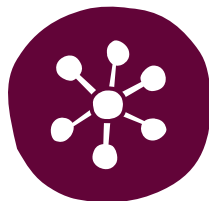
## RELEVANT LOCALISATION COMMITMENTS

- **CHS:** Commitments 3 and 4
- **Grand Bargain:** workstream 6 – Participation Revolution, commitments 1, 2, 3 and 4
- Oxfam's **GBV Call to Action** commitment 3
- Oxfam's **Commitment to Change**
- Oxfam's **Commitment on Meaningful Refugee Participation** - [Global Refugee Forum](#) | [Global Refugee Led Network](#)

## GOOD PRACTICES & SUCCESS INDICATORS CHECKLIST

- ✓ **Design, implement, and review emergency responses** in ways that empower affected and at-risk populations; with the starting point that affected people are willing and able to make choices for themselves.
- ✓ Ensure that in the **design and planning phase of humanitarian projects**, at risk / crisis affected people have a meaningful say: not only in needs assessment, but also in the design options for emergency programming.
- ✓ **Formal communication**, feedback and response mechanisms are in place and proof-tested regularly; ongoing projects and local partnerships' improvements count on ideas and suggestions from affected people.
- ✓ **In project monitoring, reviews (such as RTRs), learning exercises and evaluations** ensure that affected people are fully involved; e.g. in the identification of main issues, in contributing with key questions, programme interventions allow scope for adjusting and correcting action based on community feedback.
- ✓ Programmes support opportunities for **women leaders'** effective participation and involvement in humanitarian responses and localisation processes.
- ✓ Explore **equitable and accountable partnering & collaboration** with communities and their groupings.
- ✓ **Consider exploring community/ survivor-led funds** as part of responses: where affected people can take the lead in determining how, when, what, for what aid is necessary.
- ✓ **Express solidarity, dignity and respect** at all times in the interaction with crisis-affected people, rather than considering them as statistics; eg. dedicate quality time in the relationship, mindful of inter-personal and cultural sensitivities, practice active listening.
- ✓ Oxfam ensure and support partners and local actors to **connect crisis-affected people** with relevant government authorities and international actors.
- ✓ Oxfam teams **learn from its local partners and other local actors** on their experiences of working with crisis-affected populations at the various stages of interventions.

## TOP TIPS 5



# INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE COORDINATION & COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS

How can Oxfam promote the leadership of local/national actors through humanitarian coordination?

Coordination is key to increasing quality and reach of humanitarian programming. Coordination spaces that are more collaborative, decentralised and more inclusive of local and national actors help address power imbalances in the humanitarian system. Collaboration and collective action increase scale of humanitarian programming; they enable knowledge sharing & learning; they generate more opportunities for local and national actors to participate in political and strategic decision-making processes.

### RELEVANT LOCALISATION COMMITMENTS

- **Grand Bargain:** workstream 2 – Localisation, commitments 2 and 3
- **CHS:** Commitment 6
- Oxfam's **GBV Call to Action** commitment
- Oxfam's **Commitment to Change**
- Oxfam's **Commitment on Meaningful Refugee Participation** - [Global Refugee Forum](#) | [Global Refugee Led Network](#)

### GOOD PRACTICES & SUCCESS INDICATORS CHECKLIST

- ✓ **Ensure representation and participation (presence and voice) of local and national actors (incl. Oxfam partners) in existing humanitarian coordination mechanisms:** including clusters, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT), sectoral coordination meetings and Strategic Advisory Groups. Oxfam prioritises inclusion of WROs as part of coordination systems and highlights the role that local and national actors play in response in coordination meetings. Include, when relevant, local and national actors' contributions in their own language(s).
- ✓ **Support existing national and/or local coordination structures** and the leadership of national government in managing and coordinating quality and principled humanitarian response and processes towards greater LHL. Ideally, the government co-leads all coordination mechanisms. If not already the case, a transition plan exists to move humanitarian leadership and coordination to national and sub-national authorities.
- ✓ **Brokering collaborations and complementarities between different actors:**
  - Brokering and supporting networks, alliances, consortia and collaborations between different actors, including civil society, government, media, private sector, academia etc., as well as between humanitarian and development actors.
  - Facilitating connections and collaborations between local actors, national alliances/networks and international actors.
  - Championing and building on diversity of local expertise and contributions, including humanitarian and development actors, women's leadership etc.
- ✓ **Promoting and creating space for LHL:** by influencing the policies and practices of donors, UN, governments and INGOs that currently limit the roles of national and local actors.



## TOP TIPS 6



# VISIBILITY OF LOCAL ACTORS

## How can Oxfam promote the role and work of local actors?

Recognising and promoting the role and work of local actors in emergencies contributes to local actors' visibility, brand, and capacity for fundraising, communications, and advocacy. It aligns Oxfam's messaging with the principles of fairness and transparency we mean to live and work by. It helps debunk negative stereotypes about local humanitarian actors and end the systematic ways in which they are denied funding, visibility, power, and a strong voice in decision-making.

### RELEVANT LOCALISATION COMMITMENTS

- **Charter4Change:** promotion and advocacy commitments  
*See Oxfam's more detailed C4C Media and Communications Guidelines [here](#)*
- Oxfam's **Commitment to Change**
- Oxfam's **Commitment on Meaningful Refugee Participation** -  
[Global Refugee Forum](#) | [Global Refugee Led Network](#)

### GOOD PRACTICES & SUCCESS INDICATORS CHECKLIST

- ✓ **Include partners' names, roles, and strengths in proposals and reports:** acknowledge the work of partners in all Oxfam internal and external communications, response strategies, project documents and funding concept notes / proposals, donor reports. Note also that donors are increasingly making good partnering practice and localisation key criteria for funding.
- ✓ **Include partner information in situation reports and song-sheets:** explain clearly what roles / added value partners are playing in emergency responses. Name each partner. Indicate what share of the response activities partners are handling. Explain how the response is benefiting from the complementary strengths of Oxfam and partners. Identify partner spokespersons and include their names in song-sheets when and if appropriate.
- ✓ **Mention partners by name in press releases and media briefings:** be clear that we work with partners, mention partners by name, and include partner quotes in media releases whenever possible. Consider specific mention / public acknowledgement of WROs, women-led organisations and / or the role of women in local humanitarian civil society efforts.
- ✓ **Gather and publish content highlighting the roles of key partners:** when gathering stories and pictures about humanitarian emergencies, include interviews and photo shoots that highlight the work of partners (alone or in collaboration with Oxfam). Create profiles about interesting partner organisations and staff. Share photo collections with the relevant partners.
- ✓ **Promote partners through social media:** mention in Oxfam social media work that we work with partners, identifying them by name when possible. Retweet their tweets and share their Facebook posts when they come to our attention. When and if possible, collaborate with partners on sharing graphics and other social media products, and on livestreaming from the field.
- ✓ **Link partners with reporters/media outlets:** promoting partner organisations in the media is a high priority from a local humanitarian leadership perspective.
- ✓ **Promote communication between partners and donors:** facilitate opportunities for local partners & local actors to communicate with Oxfam's donors on progress and challenges, through bilateral or wider group discussions, including local actor networks, donors, other INGOs.

\*All requests to include partner names and quotes presuppose that we have asked the partners' permission to do so.

## TOP TIPS 7



# INFLUENCING & SHAPING THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

## How can Oxfam support influencing for LHL?

Transforming the humanitarian system to allow for more local humanitarian actions means creating space for LHL. This requires local to global efforts to develop strong policy and advocacy strategies to influence the policies and practices of donors, UN, governments and INGOs that currently limit the roles of national and local actors.

### RELEVANT LOCALISATION COMMITMENTS

- **Charter4Change:** direct funding, partnership, advocacy and equality commitments
- **Grand Bargain:** workstream 2 – Localisation, commitment 1 and 2
- **Principles of Partnership** adopted by the Global Humanitarian Platform
- Oxfam's **GBV Call to Action** commitments
- Oxfam's **Commitment to Change**
- Oxfam's **Commitment on Meaningful Refugee Participation** - [Global Refugee Forum](#) | [Global Refugee Led Network](#)

### GOOD PRACTICES & SUCCESS INDICATORS CHECKLIST

- ✓ **Understanding of the national or local humanitarian system:** context analysis of the national humanitarian architecture; knowledge of the regulations for humanitarian action, including laws regulating civil society (e.g. foreign funding regulations, freedom of assembly, freedom of media); gender and power analysis – they are all vital to be able to advocate for change.
- ✓ **Influencing 'what' – pushing for:**
  - **Increased quality and quantity of funding to non-state actors**, with fewer restrictions and bureaucratic impediments.
  - **Participatory and inclusive humanitarian coordination architecture**, with increased direct representation and greater visibility, presence, active participation of national and local NGOs, including women, LGBTBI+ organizations, and other marginalised groups.
  - **Accountability** of governments, international institutions and donors in the promotion of LHL.
  - **Partnership practices** between local/national NGOs and their international partners to be principled and enabling of LHL.
- ✓ **Influencing 'how' – activities that:**
  - **Support local/national actors' engagement and participation in debates and relevant political processes** (country, regional, global), both as individual actors and collectively. Enable local actors to connect crisis-affected people with relevant government authorities and international actors.
  - **Support women's leadership:** create spaces and support opportunities for women leaders' effective participation and involvement in humanitarian responses and localisation processes.
  - **Advocate with UN, (donor) governments and INGOs:** Oxfam directly challenges UN, government, and INGO assumptions, practices, and policies which limit progress on LHL.
  - **Support alliances, consortia and networks** to increase their influencing capacity and to participate in political/ strategic decision-making processes. Oxfam's LHL influencing work is done in alliance with local and national NGOs and INGO allies/networks.

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](https://oxfamamerica.org).

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