

OXFAM CLOSEUP

FALL 2019

**A FOREIGN COMPANY
SEIZED THEIR LAND.
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?**


ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- > FIGHTING AN UNCERTAIN CLIMATE
- > ROHINGYA REFUGEES IN BANGLADESH
- > DIGNITY FOR ALL IN 2020



OXFAM

MAKE YOUR LEGACY A WORLD WITHOUT POVERTY



Lucas Aldana is a farmer who participated in an Oxfam project to improve crop quality. He laughs with one of his five children at their home in Caparrosa, Guatemala. *Pablo Tosco/Oxfam*

THANKS TO SUPPORTERS LIKE YOU, OXFAM AMERICA HAS BEEN FIGHTING THE ROOT CAUSES OF POVERTY FOR NEARLY 50 YEARS.

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DEAR FRIENDS,

Working to end the injustice of poverty is bold and ambitious work, yet together we're making a tangible impact in so many lives. As you'll read here, your support makes possible our work in the northern region of Ethiopia, where we've been helping farmers reduce their vulnerability to drought, as well as in a refugee camp in Bangladesh, where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people are receiving water, food, clothing, and other essentials.

The fruits of your partnership are also visible in northern Cambodia, where our local partner has trained women in indigenous communities to understand their basic rights to their land and identity. In Cambodia and everywhere we work, our advocacy for ethnic minorities, indigenous people, women, and others who are disempowered by governments and companies is central to our mission.

As we approach the 2020 presidential election, we intend to keep our values front and center. In our Dignity for All initiative, which you'll read more about here, we aim to promote the needs of poor and marginalized communities here and abroad to educate supporters, political candidates, and policymakers about our issues. We're grateful for your continued support as we challenge every candidate to commit to specific plans that deliver opportunity, rights, and dignity for all.

Sincerely,

Abby Maxman
President & CEO, Oxfam America

COVER: Leaders visit the forest near their homes in northern Ratanakiri province in Cambodia. Oxfam and its partners are helping this community—and others—defend their rights to their land and identity. *Savann Oeum/Oxfam America*

PHOTO (TOP) BY: *Coco McCabe/Oxfam America*

OXFAM CLOSEUP

OXFAM AMERICA'S MEMBER MAGAZINE

FALL 2019 VOLUME 19, ISSUE 2

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FALL 2019

EDITOR

Molly Marsh

WRITERS

Chris Hufstader
Ash Kosiewicz
Elizabeth Stevens

DESIGNER

Joanna Detz

PRODUCTION LEAD

Carl M. Soares

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2019 MATCHING GIFT CAMPAIGN UPDATE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT! We launched our 2019 matching gift campaign in May with the goal of raising \$1.5 million to tackle the root causes of poverty and create a future that is fair for everyone. This fund was established through an especially generous group of Oxfam supporters. Thanks to your amazing support, we've raised more than \$825,000. We can't express how grateful we are to those of you who have given a gift!

For those who would still like to double the impact of your gift up to the fund's \$1.5 million limit, please visit: oxfam.org/closeup-match. Deadline is Dec. 31, 2019.

We welcome your feedback. Please direct letters to editor@oxfamamerica.org.

IN THE NEWS

LOOK. WATCH. LISTEN. JOIN THE CONVERSATION.

OXFAM JOINS THE GLOBAL CLIMATE STRIKE

Oxfam works every day with communities that face the direct and devastating impacts of climate change and extreme weather—and the humanitarian consequences. On September 20, Oxfam joined youth-led climate strikes around the globe to demand that leaders respond to our growing climate crisis. We marched with climate advocates in New York, Washington, D.C., and Boston using our resources, knowledge, and platforms to support their calls and complement their activism.

Read more about the need for climate action at oxf.am/closeup-threedegrees.



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Oxfam marched with others in the Washington, D.C., climate strike in September. *Mohannad Rachid/Oxfam America*

(From left to right) Nafisa Fai, CEO of the Pan African Planning Group, US Representative Suzanne Bonamici, and JoAnn Hardesty, city commissioner of Portland, Ore., met during World Refugee Day in June. *Mohannad Rachid/Oxfam America*

Mary (name has been changed), a 16-year-old from Nyal, South Sudan, was a subject in Oxfam's Photoville exhibit. *Noura Nyal Kids/Oxfam*

BORN TO BE MARRIED?

As part of our work to raise awareness of child marriage in South Sudan, Oxfam took part in Photoville, New York's annual photography festival that attracts thousands of visitors to Brooklyn Bridge Plaza.

Oxfam presented a series of portraits produced by and featuring young women in Nyal, South Sudan, where years of conflict and poverty have forced families to make the unimaginable decision to have their young daughters wed in order to survive. The photographs and words document the girls' challenges and hopes for the future.

Oxfam has worked in what is now South Sudan for over 30 years to provide humanitarian aid, long-term development programs, and support for women's rights and active citizenship.

Read more: oxf.am/closeup-nyal.



UNITING AROUND REFUGEES

To highlight World Refugee Day in June, Oxfam gathered Sisters on the Planet ambassadors and refugee partners in Washington, D.C., for two days of activities and lobbying. The Sisters are a group of women who use their influence to fight poverty with Oxfam. Participants attended a reception and film screening, and the next day lobbied for refugee resettlement with members of Congress and their staffs. Our ambassadors and partners also conducted 37 lobby meetings—13 of which included direct conversations with House and Senate members.

Read more: oxf.am/closeup-wrd19.



OXFAM CONNECT

In April, we launched Oxfam Connect, our first-ever conference for activists and supporters. More than 100 people gathered in Boston to attend workshops and interactive sessions on topics that covered the breadth of Oxfam's work, including the precarious position of refugees around the world; the future of sustainable agriculture; the humanitarian crisis in Yemen; how global warming affects vulnerable people; and gender violence in Central America.

"The conference was stimulating, educational, and made me feel more connected to the world and Oxfam," said Claire McNeil, a supporter from Winchester, Mass.

We're planning another gathering in 2020, and we'd love to see you there. You can sign up at oxf.am/closeup-connect to receive more information.

ABOVE: Centro Presente Executive Director Patricia Montes speaks to Oxfam Connect participants about refugees and migrants in the US.
Coco McCabe/Oxfam America

THE BEST STATES TO WORK

In September, we took a close look at how workers across the US are being protected—or not—by labor laws. Oxfam's Best States to Work Index compared state labor laws and worker protections across the country, calling attention to which states are doing well and which are falling short. From support for pregnant women and families, to minimum wage increases, to the right to organize, and more, Oxfam found a patchwork of worker protections.

Media outlets across the country covered this report. Local newspapers looked at their state's policies, while national media outlets such as *Vox* examined how laws vary across the US. As the *Vox* article underscored, Congress is stalled on taking steps to improve labor laws for working families at the federal level. While some states have made vital and popular moves to pass working protections on the state level, many states still fall woefully behind.

Explore the map:
oxf.am/closeup-topstates.



SOCIAL MEDIA TAKEOVERS

In September, Hollywood celebrities who are fearless champions of Oxfam's work and mission used their social media channels to share real-life stories of refugees from around the world who have been forced from their homes due to conflict, inequality, and the effects of climate change. Celebrities who took part included Genevieve Gorder, Aamito Lagum, Arjun Gupta, Daniel Gillies, Emily Robinson, Harry Lennix, Sean Maguire, and Sharon Carpenter.

Oxfam is urging people to support refugees by demanding that every 2020 presidential candidate pledge to resettle at least 125,000 refugees during his or her first year in office. As these celebrities amplified, Oxfam believes we can make America a place that honors and protects all families—no exceptions.

Read more: oxf.am/closeup-celebrities.

WE SEE A FUTURE IN WHICH NO ONE LIVES IN POVERTY.

WE CAN GET THERE BY TAKING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH, WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY ON ALL LEVELS.



SAVING LIVES IN DISASTERS

We provide immediate relief and we help local leaders devise response and resilience plans so that their communities can weather current crises and the ones yet to come.



CHALLENGING THE POWERFUL

We inspire the American public to pressure the US government, companies, and others in power to change policies and practices that keep people in poverty through our advocacy and campaigning work.



BUILDING LASTING SOLUTIONS

By developing partnerships with organizations on the ground, we foster innovative solutions that transform communities for the long term.

FIGHTING DROUGHT AND AN UNCERTAIN CLIMATE

WITH OXFAM'S SUPPORT, FARMERS IN ETHIOPIA TAKE STEPS TO REDUCE THEIR VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND BUILD A MORE SECURE LIFE. CHRIS HUFSTADER REPORTS.

Birhan Teklehaimanot gets a worried look on her face when you ask her about her wheat crop. "The rains are late now compared to last year," she says. "If we have no wheat production, there may be no income for the family. And our animals might not get enough fodder."

It's a concern because Teklehaimanot doesn't want to repeat what happened four years ago, when the lack of rain killed her family's entire wheat crop. They had no income, but luckily received a small insurance payment they used to pay back the money they had borrowed to buy fertilizer.

The family is insured again this year, which is a good thing because Teklehaimanot says rainfall patterns have become erratic in the northern Tigray region of Ethiopia, where she lives.

"It's been like this for three years," she says, looking at the floor, then up at the ceiling for a moment.

"There was enough rain before then."

Since 2015, Teklehaimanot has been part of an innovative program Oxfam helped start in Ethiopia called the R4 Initiative. R4 has helped her diversify her

farming into vegetables and fruit in addition to grain. She still insures her grain crop, and a village savings and loan program is helping her finance her farming, invest in raising some sheep, and save money for the education of her three sons.

R4 was started by Oxfam, the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), the UN's World Food Programme, Swiss RE insurance company, and the government of Ethiopia. We first tested it in 2009, and there

are now more than 25,000 individuals in Tigray and Amhara buying insurance policies to help them if lack of rain limits their harvest. Many of them are also involved in saving money, borrowing at a modest interest rate to fund their farming and participating in projects such as planting trees and building erosion control walls that help improve soil quality and channel scarce rainfall into the ground for use later. In Amhara the work is implemented by the Organization for Rehabilitation & Development.





// THE RAINS ARE LATE NOW COMPARED TO LAST YEAR. IF WE HAVE NO WHEAT PRODUCTION, THERE MAY BE NO INCOME FOR THE FAMILY. AND OUR ANIMALS MIGHT NOT GET ENOUGH FODDER. //

BIRHAN TEKLEHAIMANOT, A FARMER IN THE NORTHERN TIGRAY REGION OF ETHIOPIA

The initiative is now operating in Ethiopia and five other countries in Africa, where 87,000 farmers are involved. As the R4 Initiative enters its second decade, we are shifting from management of the day-to-day work as REST and others steer R4 into its next phase. But the objective of the initiative will remain the same: helping farmers like Teklehaimanot reduce their vulnerability to drought and the changing climate—and have the confidence to plant a crop and grow food, knowing that if the unpredictable rainfall lets them down, they can still cope and survive.

DROUGHT MORE FREQUENT

Most of the farmers we interviewed in late August expressed concern about the lack of rain in the northern Tigray area. In the mountainous Adwa region, close to the northern border with Eritrea, farmers in Baeker village gather to speak with Iqubay Bahta, a Christian priest and community organizer who wears a white hat and robe. Many of them kiss the wooden cross he carries with him as they enter an impromptu community meeting.

ABOVE: Birhan Teklehaimanot picks vegetables in her garden in Mahbere Himet, in northern Ethiopia. Oxfam and its partners have helped her and other farmers reduce their vulnerability to climate-related conditions.

OPPOSITE: Hagosa Demowez hoes in her garden, her main source of income after learning how to produce organic compost and incorporate a water tank into her plot.

PHOTOS: Petterik Wiggers/Panos for Oxfam America



LEFT: Hagosa Demowez's 7,000-liter water tank catches rainwater from the roof—water she uses daily but also saves for dry seasons.

PHOTO: Petterik Wiggers/Panos for Oxfam America

// WE HAVE MORE FOOD AND VEGETABLES NOW, AND WE EAT CONSISTENTLY WELL. THAT WAS NOT THE CASE BEFORE. //

HAGOSA DEMOWEZ, A FARMER WHO PARTICIPATED IN OXFAM'S R4 INITIATIVE, WHICH HELPED REDUCE HER RISK TO DROUGHT.

"There is now drought every two or three years," says Bahta. In years past, the community endured dry times every six years or so. Some here say the 2017 drought has not really ended; they are seeing at best erratic rains ever since.

Bahta says the community is concerned that cutting trees for firewood has contributed to the dry conditions. "We are struggling to increase vegetation to conserve moisture in the soil, and [we are] reforesting areas with varieties of plants that also produce animal fodder."

In the R4 Initiative, the labor for reforestation projects like this is partly supplied by farmers who can exchange work for index insurance for their wheat, barley, and teff fields. If rain fails to fall up to a certain level, farmers get an insurance payment. The size of the payment depends on how much coverage a farmer buys and the amount of rain detected by satellites and recorded in rain gauges.

Although payment amounts may seem low by Western standards, a little money can still help an entrepreneurial farmer recover from a loss. Trahasa Agedom, a 30-year-old mother of three in Baeker village, says she got a small payout from the insurance program two years ago after a dry growing season. She combined it with a little of her own savings and bought two hens and expanded her flock to 20 chickens. Agedom now sells eggs for 4 birr each (\$0.13) and says, "Now I can eat a chicken on every holiday."

CONSERVING WATER

High up in the hills of Rubafleg district in northern Tigray, there are wheat fields along the sides of the road and along the steep hillsides. Don't let the dark green color fool you, says Mehari Kahsay, a coordinator for Oxfam's partner REST. "We've only seen three days of rain since the start of the rainy season," he says on this late August day. The dark green of the wheat, he says, indicates drought stress.

"People are worried," Kahsay says, and not just about the wheat. "They are also worried about animal fodder in the coming months." Livestock are always plan B for farmers who lose a grain crop, but the same drought that can destroy a wheat field can also deplete the pastures on which the livestock depend.

High above the gray treeless rocky hillsides are deep purple clouds that promise rain, but the sun also breaks out between the fast-moving clouds and sweeps across the barren terrain. Kahsay and a few REST colleagues hike down a craggy hillside, step across stones in a lazy creek at the bottom of a ravine, and climb up the other side to meet with Zakerias Tesfay from Hinecho village.

Tesfay and his neighbors have built a series of bench terraces down a hillside, planted grains and vegetables such as cabbage in the beds where they have brought compost-enriched soil, and dug reservoirs connected by a canal to provide water pumped from behind a small dam in the stream bed below. On the steep hillsides near this stream they have planted trees and cactus, and they built rock walls to cut down on erosion.

Tesfay says 19 people worked on this site in exchange for insurance for their grain fields. They started the project in 2015. "The main objective is to save water," Tesfay says.

The entire group shares the vegetable crops for their own use and divides proceeds from the sale of the surplus. Planting vegetation and building terraces and walls on the hillsides is designed to "reduce runoff and reduce erosion in the

rainy times, and protect the soil,” Tesfay explains. “If we can conserve water here, we can use it to produce agricultural products in the dry season.”

“Even though this drought continues, this catchment area is in better shape than the next one over there,” says Teklay Alyemayhu, 40, REST’s project foreman working at Hinecho. He points out nearby rocky hillsides that lack any erosion control walls and have no soil or plants growing on them. “If we could do a project like this in other catchment areas and increase vegetation, it would reduce our risk to climate change, and decrease the vulnerability of people here.”

WATER AT HOME

Right next to the sprawling home of Hagosa Demowez is a small garden surrounded by a thicket of thorny branches. The fence keeps sheep and other livestock away from the cabbage, lettuce, and other vegetables Demowez is growing. Her vegetable production in this small garden is her main source of income since she participated in training with REST in 2011 and learned how to produce organic compost and got a 7,000-liter water tank that catches water from her roof.

“I am very happy with this water system, and I stopped growing cereal because I can get more money growing vegetables,” says Demowez, a single mother of three. She is financing her business with small loans she gets from her village savings association. She used her first loan to buy four sheep that she fattened up and sold; she used the profit to buy a few chickens that produce eggs she can sell.

The small business Demowez is running illustrates the features of R4’s integrated approach: micro-gardens, livestock trading, a means to capture and store rain water, an affordable source of finance, and a place to save money all come together to help women (particularly women-headed households) reduce their risk to drought. They store water for dry times, save money for when they need it, and take prudent loans to invest in their crops and livestock.



“I’m really happy with the water system and all the training about gardening and loan management,” Demowez says, crediting REST with helping her adopt a “savings culture” that encourages smart financial decisions. She’s also proud of the business she has built and says she and her family can now “eat consistently well. That was not the case before.”

It’s a rare rainy August day at her home, and she is grateful for the water falling on her garden and filling her tank. “The drought has been bad,” Demowez says. “It has been continuous for three years. Now I have to use harvested water during the rainy season.”

TOP: Hadush Atsbiha tends to cabbage growing on a bench terrace near his home in northern Tigray. He and 18 others built the terraces and share the vegetables as part of the Oxfam-supported R4 Initiative.

BOTTOM: Oxfam’s partner, REST, helped R4 participants build this terraced hillside, bring water up from a dam in the stream below, and plant vegetation to reduce erosion on nearby slopes of the watershed.

PHOTOS: Petterik Wiggers/Panos for Oxfam America

A CLOSER LOOK Q

“You can’t stop the injustice of poverty without addressing climate change,” says climate change activist Danie Stewart: oxf.am/closeup-climateyouth.

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

**AFTER A BALD-FACED LAND GRAB BY A FOREIGN COMPANY, INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN A REMOTE CAMBODIAN VILLAGE FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS.
CHRIS HUFSTADER REPORTS.**

Sal Preng remembers vividly the day in 2012 when bulldozers suddenly arrived on her family farm.

"The company came and cleared away our cashew trees right before the harvest," she says. "I lost four hectares of land and all my cashew trees."

That would have been Preng's third year of producing cashew nuts, and she was anticipating a \$1,000 harvest. Instead, the 58-year-old lost her trees, her home, and worst of all, she says, "We lost our forest, which was an important source of food. We used to go there in search of mushrooms and other vegetables."

Nearly everyone in Malik, an indigenous Toumpoun village in Ratanakiri province, was affected. The government granted an 18,952-hectare (46,432 acres) land concession to a Vietnamese company called Hoang Anh Gia Lai so it could plant rubber trees. The concession covered 400 of Malik's 942 hectares.

The company destroyed rice fields, community forests, and burial areas—with

no warning or consultation. It was a violation of Cambodia's land laws as well as international laws designed to protect the rights of indigenous people to be consulted about development projects on their land.

HOUSE-TO-HOUSE ORGANIZING

Like Preng, Khwas Blov, 48, lost her entire cashew farm, plus her banana trees, chickens, and even her home. "My husband was away, and I was alone," she says. "I could not get everything out of my house before it was knocked down and everything destroyed. [I had to] just get out before I was run over by a bulldozer."

"I still feel really angry," Blov says.

When the dust settled, Blov, Preng, and others, like their friend Khwas Vin, got together to talk. "I was angry with the company, but I did not know what to do," Preng says. "I wanted compensation for the loss of my cashew harvest and trees."

The group found Oxfam partner the Highlander Association (HA), which specializes in training indigenous people



about human rights, and the local and international laws and regulations related to land and natural resources. Its director, Dam Chanthy, is herself a Toumpoun woman.

After a few meetings with HA, Blov says, "I started to go house to house to recruit women to work together to get our land back."



// THESE WOMEN UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF LAND AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING IT FOR THE NEXT GENERATION. //

DAM CHANTHY, DIRECTOR OF OXFAM PARTNER THE HIGHLAND ASSOCIATION

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

Vin and Blov sit with Preng near a sparse field just outside Malik, where Preng now grows cassava and some vegetables. The sun starts to set, and the sky takes on a faint rose color. Blov smokes a pipe and looks up at the evening sky.

The women coordinated with non-governmental groups in Cambodia to research the company that destroyed their farms. They learned that the International Finance Corporation and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency at the World Bank had invested \$16.4 million in a Vietnamese company linked to the Hoang Anh Gia Lai rubber plantation.

This information opened up an opportunity. People living in Malik and 16 other communities affected by the land concession filed a 36-page complaint to the World Bank in 2014. It detailed the loss of land, water sources, agricultural zones, and culturally significant “spirit forests” and burial areas. In 2015 and 2016, the World Bank’s ombudsman visited the areas and began organizing meetings between the villages, government, and company.

By 2017, “the company was ordered to pay compensation, and it had to stop clearing land owned by us,” says Vin. “They are now measuring the forest land, spirit forest area, and burial areas so they can be returned to the communities.”

LAND IS SACRED

At the end of March 2019, the government of Ratanakiri province announced that the company would return an additional 742 hectares of land comprising culturally significant “spirit mountains,” burial areas, and other environmentally sensitive water sources. The communities are still negotiating compensation for lost harvests and property.

Vin says the Highlander Association and other nongovernment organizations have provided essential training for women in Malik, including traditional land management practices, negotiation skills, and lobbying tactics.

“Women’s rights, land rights, and our right to free, prior, and informed consent—it’s very important to know all this,” she says.

LEFT: Khwas Blov (left) and Sal Preng mobilized their neighbors in Malik, Cambodia, to stop a foreign company from seizing their land.

OPPOSITE: Khwas Vin helped push a foreign rubber company to respect her community’s rights. “We know our rights in addition to the land rights—our right to free, prior, and informed consent,” she says. “It’s very important to know this.”

PHOTOS: Savann Oeurm/Oxfam America

Oxfam’s support of the Highlander Association is part of our global effort to help indigenous and poor communities defend their land rights, manage their natural resources, and participate in meaningful discussions about responsible forms of development. With more and more pressure on indigenous and poor communities, and a greater and greater need to protect fragile forest lands, this work is more important than ever.

Chanthy says the women here played a key role in the negotiations by taking a nonconfrontational approach to their interaction with the government and company. But they remained firm—and looked to the future.

“These women understand the importance of land,” she says, “and the importance of having it for the next generation.”

A CLOSER LOOK Q

Read more about how Oxfam helps indigenous people defend their land rights: oxf.am/closeup-landrights.



A TREACHEROUS JOURNEY

FROM CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION TO INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY, OXFAM IS ASSISTING HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF ROHINGYA REFUGEES FROM MYANMAR WHO FLED THE TERRIFYING ATTACKS OF 2017. ELIZABETH STEVENS REPORTS.

It has been more than two years since over 700,000 Rohingya from Myanmar became refugees. Targeted by the military with mass violence that the United Nations describes as ethnic cleansing, they left behind everything they owned. They carried with them a heavy burden: the memories of atrocities carried out against their loved ones, and of the abuse that they themselves endured. The emotional wounds are still fresh; ask a refugee a question about the present day, and you

will likely hear a haunting personal story of what happened in August 2017.

"We saw with our own eyes people tied up and thrown into police trucks," says a woman who lives in a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. "Blood flowed from the trucks like water."

"They killed my brothers and raped my sisters and mother and killed them," says a refugee named Abu Musa. "We get up every morning and wonder how we can go on."

Yet, somehow the life of the community does go on. The camps bustle with activity, with roadside market vendors selling everything from vegetables to pots and pans to brightly colored clothing. Trucks arrive with goods and make their way slowly along brick roads, crafted by hand to survive the monsoon rains. Children surround new visitors, eager to interact and play. Someone tells a joke, and someone laughs.

PROTECTING LIVES, RIGHTS, AND DIGNITY

When refugees began their exodus in 2017, protecting lives was Oxfam's priority. The camps that formed to accommodate the refugees quickly became overcrowded—creating perfect conditions for the outbreak and spread of deadly waterborne diseases. With your support, we helped prevent a public health emergency by constructing latrines, providing access to clean water, distributing hygiene materials such as soap and sanitary pads, and spreading the word about safe hygiene practices. Over time, we constructed the largest sewage treatment plant in a refugee camp anywhere in the world.

"Before learning about hygiene from Oxfam, I didn't know how to use soap properly," says a young woman named Saitara. "I didn't know about washing hands before eating and cooking. Now, I am cooking food safely."

"After Oxfam's work," says a mother of three named Hamida, "our children didn't get diarrhea so often."

Safety—particularly for vulnerable groups like women and girls—was also a key priority, so Oxfam installed solar-powered lights around the camps and provided families with solar flashlights and lanterns to help residents move around safely in the night.

"We use the flashlights to get to the latrine at night or to find a lost child," says Saitara, "or to help people who are elderly or disabled."

And to be sure people had access to food, clothing, and other essentials, we distributed vouchers families could use in the local markets.

For women and girls, conservative religious practices combined with crowding in the camps have translated into lives of particular confinement and constraint. Oxfam has provided women with burqas (garments that provide coverage from

head to toe) to enable them to leave their shelters without violating their community's standard of modesty.

"When I'm wearing a burqa," says a mother named Noor, "I can go anywhere."

Thanks to your support, we're also helping to create safe spaces for women to gather and make their voices heard, and through women's groups and musical performances, we are working with local organizations and communities to raise awareness about wider issues such as early marriage, gender-based violence, and the traditional roles of women and men.

The influx of refugees has been hard on the host communities. Among other things, already-low wages have dropped, while the cost of living has risen. To help address local poverty and ease tensions between hosts and refugees, Oxfam has employed more than 1,800 Bangladeshis in construction projects such as building roads, schools, and water points.



// WHEN OXFAM OFFERED TO HELP ME LEARN TO SIGN MY NAME, I HAD NEVER TOUCHED A PEN BEFORE. I USED TO FEEL SMALL, BUT AFTER LEARNING TO SIGN MY NAME, I FELT BIGGER. IT MADE ME FEEL HAPPY INSIDE. MAYBE I CAN LEARN SOMETHING ELSE. I WOULD LOVE TO GO TO SCHOOL SOMEDAY. //

SAITARA, A YOUNG WOMAN LIVING IN A REFUGEE CAMP IN COX'S BAZAR, BANGLADESH

OPPOSITE: Khalida lives in a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Like hundreds of thousands of others, she was driven from her country by Myanmar's military. "This time we were able to flee, but if we return to our country, maybe next time we won't be able to escape."

LEFT: Saitara signs her name.

PHOTOS: Elizabeth Stevens/Oxfam America



// NOW WE EAT THREE TIMES A DAY, AND WE HAVE BOUGHT FOUR GOATS. //

MUMTAZ BEGUM AND HER HUSBAND, NURUL HOQUE, AFTER RECEIVING SUPPORT FROM OXFAM PARTNER MUKTI

LEFT: Nurul Hoque and his wife, Mumtaz Begum. An attack by pirates left Hoque blind and his family destitute. An Oxfam partner helped Hoque and his wife establish a roadside food stall.

PHOTO: Elizabeth Stevens/Oxfam America

We also worked with partners to improve livelihoods of particularly vulnerable families in the host communities. For example, when pirates attacked the vessel of fisherman Nurul Hoque, they blinded him, and he was reduced to begging on the street. Oxfam partner Mukti stepped in, providing funds and business training that enabled his family to start up a roadside food stall.

"Now, we eat three times a day," says his wife, Mumtaz Begum, "and we have bought four goats."

In all, Oxfam and our partners have reached more than 360,000 people with aid.

FEAR AND LONGING

But nothing we do will make the camps feel like home, and despite the violent past, the refugees' longing for their homeland is palpable.

They are deeply grateful to the government and host communities of Bangladesh for providing them with

shelter and safety, but they don't want to live out their lives as refugees.

"We used to be farmers. We grew rice and chilis, and our sons fished. My husband had a snack stall," says Hamida. "We want that life back." Many others say the same, but always with a caveat.

"We can't leave until we have a promise. We need security and citizenship in our country," says Faruk, the father of a young daughter. "Our people have been killed before, and we don't want to face that again."

Oxfam is committed to doing more than simply provide aid in the camps. With advocacy staff positioned in capital cities around the world, we are urging governments to put pressure on Myanmar to provide the Rohingya people with the rights and citizenship they've been denied for decades, and with a chance to return to their home country when the refugees themselves deem it safe.

In the meantime, the Rohingya people are doing their best to recover, and to

hang onto their hopes and dreams. They depend on people like you—to ensure that Oxfam has the funds we need to sustain our water and sanitation programs and deepen our engagement on women's rights, and to urge our elected officials to use their influence on behalf of Rohingya rights and protection.

"We are asking for our country back," says a woman named Azara. "And for a chance to live there in peace."

A CLOSER LOOK Q

Learn five ways you can support refugees: [oxf.am.closeup-resettle](https://oxf.am/closeup-resettle).

DIGNITY FOR ALL IN 2020

For almost 80 years, people like you have fueled Oxfam's mission to end the injustice of poverty. From the highlands of Central America to the cornfields of Zimbabwe, we have worked together for dignity and human rights for everyone.

Now, as we approach the 2020 presidential election, we ask you to join us on the next chapter of this journey. "Dignity for All" is our effort to place climate change, income inequality, inequality for women and girls, refugee crises, and the poverty they create at the heart of our national conversation.

Why Dignity for All? Because everyone deserves to be treated equally. We all deserve the same basic rights: a livable planet, food, shelter, education, health care. No matter where or how you live in this world, we all deserve to be treated with dignity and compassion.

OUR FOCUS

Climate change. Extreme weather and other effects from our changing climate hit the vulnerable first and worst. But climate change will impact us all. We must bridge borders and stand up for the right to a livable planet for all.

Opportunity for all, not just the privileged few. All of us deserve to be governed by fair rules applied equally to everyone, rather than the whims of powerful corporations and individuals. All of us deserve good jobs, health care, and high-quality education.

Dignity for women. Across the world, women are disproportionately affected by violence, discrimination, food insecurity, and climate change, which continue to drive the cycle of poverty. When we help women, we help humanity. Justice for women means justice for all.



Oxfam participated in numerous climate strikes around the world in September, including this one in New York. *Becky Davis/Oxfam America*

Respect for those fleeing their homes.

We must not pit ourselves against one another or blame the most vulnerable among us. We must treat refugees and migrants with compassion, offer them help when they need it, and protect their rights. We must stand up for the shared humanity in us all.

Basic human rights and equality.

We must work together toward shared progress, not gaining at the expense of families and communities elsewhere.

In Oxfam's history of advocating for justice, we have criticized and praised US presidents and elected officials from both parties. Like many Americans, we are deeply concerned about many of the recent policy choices made by the current administration and worried about congressional inaction on the fight against poverty.

In the rare instances when Congress has managed to pass meaningful legislation in recent years, too often it has been to protect the interests of the wealthy and powerful, sometimes at the expense of those seeking to lift themselves out of poverty. Democratic and Republican leaders alike need to do more to reject the influence of special interests and make fighting poverty a priority.

This election, we're asking you to demand that all candidates—left, right, and center—rise to this moment. Join us to challenge every candidate, regardless of party, to commit to specific plans that deliver Dignity for All.

A CLOSER LOOK Q

Learn more at oxfam.am/closeup-dignity and sign up with the Oxfam America Action Fund to get more involved.



OXFAM AMERICA
226 CAUSEWAY STREET, 5TH FLOOR
BOSTON, MA 02114-2206

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