

Voices for CHANGE



OXFAM
Canada

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NONE OF US ARE SAFE UNTIL ALL OF US ARE SAFE

It is a little over a year now since the first known case of COVID-19 was discovered in Canada.

As we pause to reflect on everything that has happened in the last year, our thoughts rest on the tremendous outpouring of love and support from our donors.

Since March of 2020, Oxfam supporters have been battling this pandemic, not just here at home in their own lives – but around the globe.

You helped us reach **more than 11 million people** in **sixty-three countries**. You have helped protect vulnerable people from contracting the virus, and helped us fight the economic devastation the virus brings with it.

Back in March, we asked ourselves ...

"How do people around the world wash their hands when 1 in 3 people don't have clean water?"

*"How do **2 billion people** survive quarantine if it means they can no longer feed their families?"*

And ... *"How can women – who make up **70 percent of the world's health care workers** – access the personal protective equipment they need to keep safe?"*

Within days of the COVID-19 pandemic being declared back in March, Oxfam mobilized a global response to the crisis that put these three issues at the heart of everything. Within five months, we had already reached more than 4 million people.

Three things made Oxfam so swift and effective in our COVID-19 response.

The first was the infrastructure we already had in place – like water "ATMs" in informal settlements in Nairobi, where people could access water free of charge.

The second was the deep experience in battling the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, cholera outbreaks in Yemen and South Sudan, and the Zika outbreak in the Americas.

The third – and most important – thing that made us so effective ... was you. Our Oxfam Canada family of supporters. And we couldn't be more grateful.



YOU HELPED US KEEP THE WATER RUNNING AND THE SOAP COMING

Public health officials knew right away that COVID-19 could only be stopped by rigorous hand washing and determined social distancing.

Two things that are easy here in Canada – and incredibly difficult in many parts of the world.

With your help, Oxfam made water quantity and quality a priority in all our work to stop the spread of COVID-19. And we made sure to work closely with the communities we served to gain their input.

Local partners are at the center of our humanitarian work in every way.

In Bangladesh, refugees helped design our handwashing stations!

Let's go back to May 2020... You can imagine how hard everybody had been working to keep COVID-19 out of the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh.

But bad news came on May 15th, when the first case of COVID-19 was detected.

“Forty thousand people per square kilometer,” explains Oxfam’s Enamul Hoque. “You can’t imagine how crowded the camps are.”

Enamul is Oxfam’s coordinator for water, sanitation and hygiene. They realized quickly that the handwashing facilities they had set up in the

Photo Credit: Fabeha Monir/Oxfam



previous three years were not going to be effective against the hyper-contagious virus. So they set out to create a safer design.

Enamul took an approach we call “social architecture.” This means that the community is part of the design process – especially women and girls, who have so many responsibilities related to water and keeping their families clean.

The women and girls Enamul interviewed weighed in on everything from the number of legs it should stand on to the installation of hooks.

Hand-cranked spigots were out, foot pedals were in, and simplicity was the key.

“What was also significant is that this process helped girls take charge of a piece of their lives,” says Enamul.

“The Rohingya refugees have experienced so much trauma and loss, and girls stuck in the camps have almost no space to exercise their minds and their power. We invited them to think like architects and design something that would benefit them and their families.”

YOU DID IT! YOUNG WOMEN IN THE PHILIPPINES ARE NOW LEGALLY PROTECTED "GIRLS NOT BRIDES"!



Fantastic news from the Philippines!

You've helped pass a new law!

This is a country in which 15% of girls are married before they turn 18. In recent years, that meant as many as 726,000 child brides. It's heart-breaking. And unacceptable.

For years, Oxfam supporters have been working hard to change that – by helping to fund our Creating Spaces program and helping us lobby and influence decision-makers.

In 2019, Philippine Senator Risa Hontiveros (a Creating Spaces advocate) filed Senate Bill 1373 – the 'Girls not Brides Act of 2019.'

And last November 9th, a historic moment was reached, as the bill passed the third and final reading in the Senate.

It was a huge day for girls and women in the Philippines. For equality.

Once that law is enshrined, child marriage will be illegal. Finally.

The vote couldn't have come at a more important time. With the global pandemic, Senator Hontiveros was rightly concerned that the number of child brides may increase, as poverty is one of the main drivers of child marriage.

But now the future is safer and brighter for girls and women in the Philippines:

"Today we give our girls a chance to dream, a chance to define their future according to their own terms. We defend their right to declare when they are ready to begin their families. We tell them their health matters to us, their education matters to us. We give them a fighting shot."

-Senator Hontiveros

Oxfam is fighting child marriage around the globe. We know that girls who are forced to marry as children are much less likely to finish their education. They are much more likely to face complications or death due to childbirth. They live their lives far more economically vulnerable, and face a higher likelihood of domestic violence.

They lose their childhoods.

Oxfam supporters won't stay silent on this issue. We send out love and appreciation to everyone who has helped fund the Creating Spaces program to date. We have a lot more work to do – but we are changing the world, country by country!

"WE ARE HUNGRY AND STARVING. WE CANNOT GO BACK ANYWHERE."



Mollika should be at work right now. Instead, she is waiting outside a food distribution point in Dhaka, Bangladesh. A food bank funded by Oxfam, through our Securing Rights program.

Her sons have been asking for food since morning.

Mollika is just one of the millions of domestic workers who have been pushed farther into poverty because of COVID-19.

"Rent is due, and my children's education has stopped. The house I used to work in as a housemaid are no longer employing help."

Women domestic workers around the world were already struggling – often vulnerable and exploited.

In Bangladesh, acute poverty, dowry, divorce, climate change and family debts or loans drive women and girls to urban areas to seek work. In many cases, women like Mollika end up as domestic workers or part-time help. Most do not have contracts and are not paid overtime. Their labour rights are not safeguarded under the law.

That's why Oxfam launched the Securing Rights program in 2019. The program empowers and organizes women, ensuring they can secure decent work and a life free from violence. At the same time, Oxfam is working to influence policymakers and stakeholders to protect the rights of domestic workers.

When COVID-19 made it to Bangladesh in March 2020, a nationwide lockdown was imposed. And informal sectors were the hardest hit. Employees like Mollika were sent on unpaid leave and many told not to return again until the pandemic was over.

In response, through the Securing Rights program we have provided temporary support to domestic workers with food and hygiene items. We've been educating employers about how they can safely re-engage the services of these workers.

And we will keep on working to secure long-term, permanent rights for domestic workers – and to ensure that governments put their most vulnerable citizens at the heart of their economic recovery plans. In Bangladesh, and around the world.



SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN ETHIOPIA

Every day, Birhan and her husband and sons would eat shiro, a chickpea stew.

It sounds delicious, until you realize that this is all they ever ate.

This family in Ethiopia had become one of millions affected by erratic weather patterns caused by climate change. And its effect on their crops and their livelihoods.

Oxfam's focus is on making sure people can withstand drought when it hits. Or flooding. Or disaster. The main two ways: diversify their sources of income and grow crops that are more resistant to drought.

Here is Birhan's story:

"In 2015 we had no rain. Our entire wheat crop was ruined and we had no animal feed either.

My husband and I could not feed ourselves and our three boys.

We used to eat only shiro – chickpea stew.

But now we have vegetables.

Before we had no animals. Now I have a business.

I received a loan to buy four sheep. Now we have 12.

Growing these vegetables helps our diet and selling them helps cover our expenses.



Before I could not conceive of doing a business like this. I wanted to work, but didn't know what to do.

Now I have a business. I've had training, and I am thinking of all sorts of ideas. It's a different mindset.

I'm very happy inside. I'm satisfied."

Oxfam's role? Along with the UN World Food Program, we are helping farming families learn new ways to manage the risks they face due to unpredictable weather. Through this scheme, households can access loans and drought insurance that will help them out when crops fail. They can participate in environmental projects that strengthen communities, and learn new ways to save.

Thanks to our donors' support, Oxfam has reached nearly 100,000 people in Ethiopia and five other African countries with this program.

And Birhan is saving money every month to send her children to school.

ROWENA'S CORNER



She could read three or four books a day easily.

Books were her passion. And she could keep me and my sister quiet any time by creating a story to tell us.

When she finished school, Paulette started volunteering in the developing world – in India and Papua New Guinea. She had such a sense of adventure, and always wanted to help people in poverty.

Even after she came home, that drive to help people continued. She taught French to kids in school, and taught recently arrived children how to read and speak English. She even worked with a couple of people who had had strokes and she was helping them relearn the language.

My sister was honest to a fault. One evening at the lake I decided to surprise my dad and take him fishing. And unexpectedly – of course – he caught a fish. Paulette went out and bought him a fishing license the next day!

Paulette was a long time monthly donor to Oxfam. She knew that she could trust Oxfam to do the right thing with her donations.



I think we can all agree that now is a time we relish reading a story that warms our hearts. Here Gene shares with us his sister Paulette's inspiring profile...

“When I think of my sister, Paulette, I remember us going to school together when we were kids growing up in Saskatchewan. We took a horse and cart in the summertime, and a horse and toboggan in the winter.

We might not have walked uphill both ways, but the wind blew in our faces both ways!

Paulette was an avid reader.

I was so proud that Paulette decided to leave her RRIF to Oxfam, along with two other organizations that were important to her. She cared a lot about finding ways where she could be helpful to the rest of the world.

I feel like my sister was the kind of person our world needs more of.”

DID YOU KNOW?

Gifts via an RRSP/RRIF, TFSA or Life insurance
DO NOT need to go through your estate.

For more information, please contact **ROWENA GRIFFITHS** at **613.627.8634**
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