




INNOVATION AT OXFAM



OXFAM
Australia

Father of two Gede Sudarma has worked for Oxfam Australia Trading producer partner Bali Zen for more than 10 years. Gede is the lead craftsman in developing new products — traditionally he would have found it difficult to find work in Bali as his fingers were malformed at birth. Photo: Lara McKinley/OxfamAUS.





“UNLOCKING INNOVATION AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE TO TACKLE POVERTY”

At Oxfam, everything we do is guided by one goal: ending the injustice of poverty. It's a work in progress — but that progress is very real. The number of people living in extreme poverty has been halved in just 15 years. An end to poverty is within the reach of our generation.

To achieve that goal, a powerful and practical response is needed. That's why we constantly question what we do. We ask ourselves how we could be better. We explore what we could do differently. We examine who we could work with to have the biggest possible impact.

We don't chase innovation for the sake of it. But we do recognise that the world is changing at an unprecedented rate — so we change with it. Failure to do that would mean failure to be as effective as we can be. It would mean we were failing to make the biggest difference to people's lives.

So we collaborate, sometimes with unexpected organisations. We work with local partners but rely on our global expertise too. We encourage staff to think freely. We learn from what we see and do. And we adapt to a changing world and evolving technologies.

The causes of poverty don't stay the same, so we don't stay the same either. Instead, we move forward, guided by one thing that will never change: our determination to end the injustice of poverty.

Read on to learn about some examples of innovation at Oxfam.

1. OXFAM TRADING WAREHOUSE

Supporting individuals and communities in Australia and around the world to change their futures through a fair and ethical business model.

Oxfam's social enterprise, Oxfam Australia Trading, is an example of a shared value business model. We provide employment and income to artisans, producers and communities so that they can lift themselves out of poverty.

We also support Australians to change their own futures through our warehouse in Adelaide, where we manage all the logistics and distribution for Oxfam's national retail network. The Warehouse program provides opportunities for Australians struggling to find work or recovering from workplace injury, as well as trainees and those seeking asylum. This program enables employees and volunteers to gain new skills, build confidence and self-esteem, increase their employment prospects and — for employees — earn an income. In this way it lays the foundations for marginalised people in Australia to break the cycle of poverty for themselves — at the same time breaking the cycle of poverty for others globally.



Brian Georgiou is a long-term volunteer at the Oxfam Australia Trading warehouse in Adelaide. Out of work for a long time and suffering depression, Brian says his volunteer work has helped a lot with his health. "It keeps me alive, in a way," he says. Photo: Lara McKinley/OxfamAUS.

2. SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IN SRI LANKA

Supporting entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka to learn from other businesses, develop viable social business models and attract vital investment to help the country rebuild.

Oxfam is supporting social enterprises in Sri Lanka — from mushroom farming cooperatives to spice trading — to play a vital role in the country's development after years of conflict. We help people learn new skills, develop trade partnerships, and create opportunities for women and other marginalised groups.

Oxfam works with producers and artisans to develop marketable products and access new markets. We achieve this by collaborating with key national and international traders — including Oxfam Australia Trading — to facilitate new export and local trading opportunities.

We also collaborate with Lanka Social Ventures, a social enterprise that connects small business owners with mentors who can provide business advice and technical training. The enterprise helps smallhold farmers, cooperatives, artisans and business owners develop their products to sell to new markets while also helping them attract new financing options.

Oxfam supports small scale programs — such as this pottery group in Keliyapura, Sri Lanka — to generate livelihoods, encourage women's leadership and develop connections with other successful businesses. Photo: Pavithra Jovan de Mello/OxfamAUS.



3. DESIGN FOR CHANGE

Worked with tens of thousands of students to explore how they can use their skills to tackle social issues. Every year, thousands of the country's greatest potential change makers and activists graduate from colleges and universities.

They are not graduating from Politics, Economics or Public Policy courses but from Design, Marketing, Advertising and Communications — because at the heart of public campaigning is the ability to sell solutions to problems, which convince the public a different future is possible.

For the past seven years, Design for Change worked with tens of thousands of students to explore how they can use their skills to tackle social issues. We partnered with award-winning design studios and creative agencies, featured at leading cultural festivals such as Sydney's Vivid Festival, and helped kick-start a conversation about the relationship between creative industries and social change.

Design for Change alumni in the Australian workforce have more options for the kind of work they want to pursue and the types of careers they want to build as a result of engaging with this program during their student years. As these alumni are likely to work for another 40 years, it's a program that will contribute to the future Oxfam Australia wants to build for a long time to come.

Oxfam has encouraged young designers like Anastasiia Kucherenko to be involved in our work through world-wide competitions and initiatives like Design for Change. Photo: Nataliia Kucherenko.



4. THE ARMS TRADE TREATY

By joining with more than 100 organisations and millions of people worldwide, we campaigned to regulate the devastating international arms trade — prompting the United Nations (UN) to adopt an historic Arms Trade Treaty.

The unregulated global arms trade fuels conflict, poverty and human rights abuses on a massive scale. Starting in 2003, we joined with a worldwide coalition to push for lasting change. A million people added their voices to our call for a legally binding agreement to prevent arms from ending up with human rights abusers around the world.

As part of the Control Arms coalition, we worked with organisations that shared our position and organisations that didn't — from human rights groups and legal experts to arms industry representatives. After a decade of relentless campaigning and lobbying, we saw history happen. The UN ratified an Arms Trade Treaty with the power to transform the way arms are sold and protect millions from the scourge of armed violence. Today, we continue to work with our partners worldwide through Control Arms, keeping the pressure on to ensure the Arms Trade Treaty is implemented across the globe and that governments follow its provisions.

Ben Murphy, Oxfam Australia's Humanitarian Advocacy Coordinator with Gary Quinlan, Australia's former Ambassador to the United Nations at the ceremony for Australia's ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty. Photo: Champion Hamilton/Champion Eye Media.



5. STRAIGHT TALK

Bringing together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from across the nation to strengthen their capacity as leaders, decision makers and change makers.

Straight Talk supports participants to more effectively engage with Australia's political system and form powerful networks with each other and with women in Parliament. The program allows women to initiate meaningful conversations and relationships with politicians from all sides of politics. By encouraging our Parliamentarians to hear what is happening on the ground, the program helps keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and particularly those important to women, on the political agenda.

Women have reported that they feel inspired, empowered and more confident following the program, with an improved range of skills and tools. Many have said that they will return home ready to initiate discussions and engage with their Parliamentarians and communities, and that they feel more able to implement the change they want to make.

More than 550 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have participated in Straight Talk since the program began in 2009. Photo: James Henry/OxfamAUS.



6. BEHIND THE BRANDS

Oxfam's Behind the Brands campaign proves that even the world's biggest food companies are no match for people power. Every year, we publish a scorecard rating the ten largest companies on their actions in developing countries, looking at issues from the treatment of women and farmers to land and water use.

Many of the companies could be working far harder to prevent and tackle poverty. So when weaknesses are found, Behind the Brand campaigners respond — and so do the companies. Coca-Cola and Nestlé pledged zero tolerance for land grabs. Kellogg's and General Mills committed to tackling climate change. In just two years, 700,000 actions have been taken with Behind the Brands, each one moving the world's food giants closer to a future without poverty.

In Australia, we have used some of the land cases from our Behind the Brands work to ask Australia's big four banks to agree to a "zero tolerance" approach to land grabs. We have also connected Australia's banks with Coca-Cola and Pepsi so they can understand on a practical level how these companies implemented a zero tolerance approach.

Eliete Costa Marília and Deisieli Veron play on the Panambi-Lagoa Rica ancestral lands in Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. The tribe's ancestral land has been under threat from land grabbing to grow sugarcane. Photo: Tatiana Cardeal/Oxfam.



7. THE OXFAM BUCKET



One of Oxfam's greatest water innovations is also one of its most simple — the Oxfam bucket, which has won awards for its unique design.

Until 1997, Oxfam used jerry cans to supply people with clean, safe water during an emergency. These cans were bulky and expensive to transport, and once the lid was lost the water could become contaminated with dirt and germs.

Gathering feedback from health promoters, water engineers and people living in refugee camps, Oxfam's Public Health Team developed the Oxfam bucket, with attention to the tiniest, but often most crucial, details. For example, the moulding process leaves a small pimple on the bottom of normal buckets. This pimple is removed from the Oxfam bucket — an essential, but easily overlooked, consideration for use in countries where loads are usually carried on the head.

The bucket is designed to be light, durable and keep water clean and safe. It stacks, is easy to transport, has a tight-fitting lid to prevent contamination, dirt and spillage, and an insertable tap to stop collected water from being recontaminated. The plastic is UV-resistant to prevent deterioration in the sunlight and algal build-up.

Oxfam staff distribute hygiene kits in Sankhu, Nepal following the devastating earthquake. The kits contain a bucket for clean water, a bar of soap, oral rehydration salts and towels. Photo: Aubrey Wade/Oxfam.

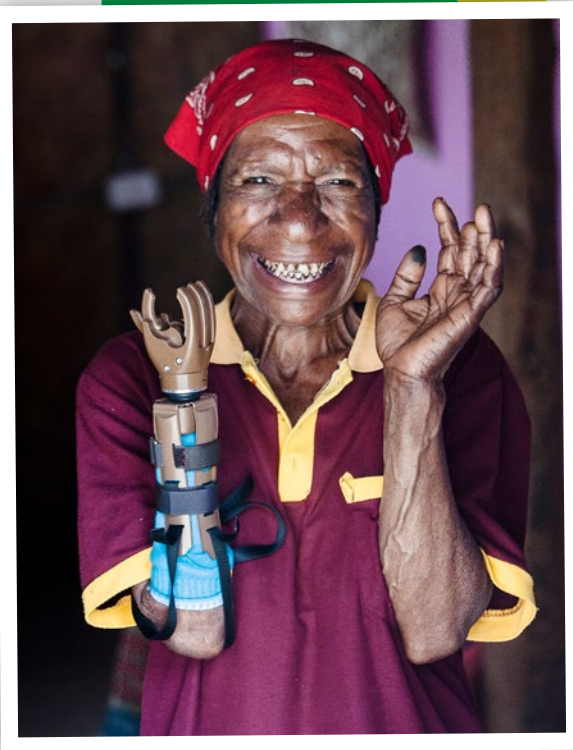
8. ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

With Australian Government support, Oxfam is now rescuing three women every week from the Highlands who would otherwise face torture and probable death.

Our program supports 12 community-based organisations in PNG to enable women to gain power over their lives and live free from violence, through changes in attitudes, ideas and beliefs about gender relations and women's rights. The program is increasing crisis support services for survivors of violence, raising men and boys' awareness of the impacts of violence against women and strengthening the capacity of local partners to deliver services.

Our research identified a major gap in current arrangements: the lack of opportunities for women to earn a living after they have been repatriated. In recognition of this finding, we established a pilot trial of a 'Business Start-up Package' for survivors of violence. Survivors of violence will be eligible for up to \$400 to help them buy basic items such as sewing machines, gardening tools and mobile phones. Part of the allowance can also be used to fund literacy classes or to attend basic business training courses.

Mama Rasta proudly shows her prosthetic hand, provided as part of Oxfam's Voice for Change program. She says this support — along with counselling — has helped her recover from brutal attacks following accusations of sorcery. Photo: Rodney Dekker/Oxfam.



9. WORKER SAFETY IN BANGLADESH



Oxfam supporters have successfully campaigned for Australian companies to sign the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Accord following the fires in Rana Plaza.

At least two garment factories in the Rana Plaza building had recently passed company labour and safety standard audits. Despite these checks, on 24 April 2013 the Rana Plaza building collapsed killing more than 1,100 workers, mainly young women, and injuring 2,500.

Kmart, Target, Cotton On, Forever New, Woolworths, Specialty Fashion Group (Katie's, Millers, Rivers, Crossroads, Autograph and City Chic), Pacific Brands and Pretty Girl Fashions (Rockmans, Beme, W-Lane and Table Eight) have since signed the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Accord. This Accord brings together the UN's International Labour Organization, Bangladeshi unions, international unions, the Government of Bangladesh and garment companies to oversee safety inspections for more than 1,600 garment factories in Bangladesh.

More than 8,700 people signed the petitions calling on companies to sign the Accord and publish their factory locations with countless people emailing and calling the companies or leaving messages on their Facebook pages. Thanks to these supporters, the 2 million Bangladeshi workers who will be covered by the Accord will be safer when they go to work.

Sumi Abedin, a survivor from the Tarzeen garment factory fire in Bangladesh and Kalpona Akter, a labour rights activist visited Australia to highlight working conditions for workers and thank those who campaigned for change in their industry. Photo: David Crosling/OxfamAUS.

10. PEE POWER

An innovative toilet that harnesses the power of pee could be used to light toilet cubicles in refugee camps and make them safer.

We have teamed up with researchers at the University of West England to trial a toilet that converts urine into electricity. The toilet collects people's pee, which fuels microbial fuel cells that then generate electricity.

It can be difficult to provide power for lighting in toilet cubicles in refugee camps. This means toilets can be dark, dangerous places, especially for women. This technology has the potential to provide cheap, readily available energy out of the natural waste that people create and need to get rid of.

We are hoping to trial a prototype toilet at one of our refugee camps this year.



Students have donated their pee to prove it can generate electricity, in a joint project between the University of the West of England and Oxfam. Prototypes are expected to be trialled in refugee camps soon. Photo: University of the West of England.

11. LASTING CHANGE FOR RICE GROWERS IN SRI LANKA

Supporting farmers to make lasting change that will mean they can grow and earn more in the future.

In Sri Lanka, Oxfam and partners are sharing techniques that help small farmers grow more rice on drought-prone land — without using chemical fertilisers that have been linked to major rural health problems and many other environmental issues. While farmers have seen great results, the government still directs most of its agricultural support to chemical fertiliser subsidies, making it harder for farmers adopting these techniques to get ahead.

We supported farmers to take their concerns to the government — developing policies, holding meetings with government departments, and organising public forums where the farmers could speak to the government and the opposition. We even helped set up a demonstration rice field just near the Parliament building in Sri Lanka, so politicians could go down and see the farmers in action. After this, the Government of Sri Lanka allocated more support for ecologically friendly agriculture. And earlier this year, the opposition Presidential candidate made the farmers' demands part of his election manifesto, committing to introduce a new subsidy scheme to support organic farmers. The candidate was elected as President, and we are continuing to work to ensure farmers receive the support they need.

K.H. Ranjanees is a vegetable farmer in Miniethiliya, Sri Lanka. With Oxfam's support, she has banded together with other growers in her area to sell their produce directly to consumers. In bypassing the middlemen, farmers now receive a fair price and poor families can access affordable, fresh vegetables. Photo: Pavithra Jovan de Mello/OxfamAUS.



12. VOUCHERS TO RECOVER FROM CYCLONE PAM

We have been distributing vouchers to families in Vanuatu affected by Cyclone Pam. Cyclone Pam caused destruction and created major needs to be addressed in Vanuatu such as rebuilding livelihoods and homes.

Our response has focused on reinvigorating the local economy and providing supplies and support for communities to increase the production and availability of food. The cyclone destroyed most food crops, including those that many communities rely on to sell for income.

The vouchers we provide for families can be exchanged at specific local stores and suppliers for farming and building materials and other general goods. The aim is to help local communities rebuild their livelihoods and grow food.

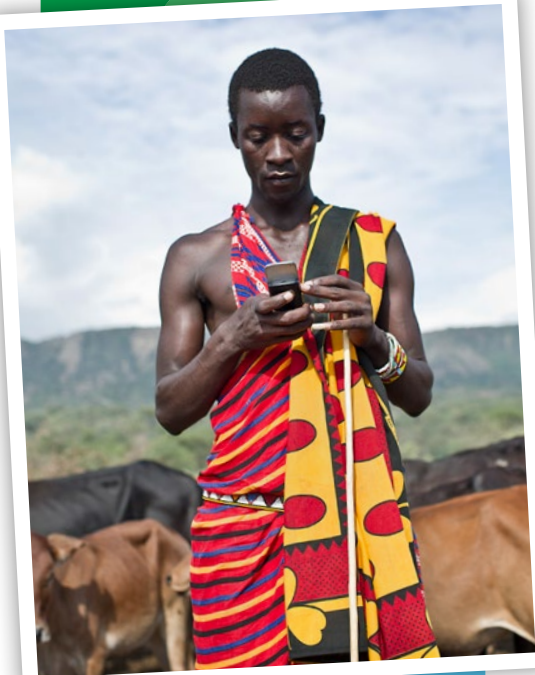


Marie-Lea receives Oxfam vouchers following Cyclone Pam, in Matarisu village, Vanuatu. Vouchers can be exchanged for goods, help families rebuild and stimulate the local economy. Photo: Groovy Banana/OxfamAUS.

13. MOBILE NUTRITION

We are putting power in millions of people's hands by delivering valuable information on farming, food and healthcare direct to mobile phones.

It's a serious group effort: bringing together Oxfam, mobile network operators and dozens of organisations that specialise in agriculture, nutrition and health. Because working collaboratively means we can reach far more people, we're expecting the project to have a serious impact. By 2017, three million people across Africa and Asia will be able to make more informed choices and decisions about everything from crop storage and planting seasons to maternal and child health — simply by looking at their mobiles.



Massai pastoralist and school teacher Isaac Mkalia checks his mobile phone. A new partnership between Oxfam and mobile network operators will help to fight hunger and malnutrition and is expected to reach more than three million people. Photo: Sven Torfinn/Oxfam.

14. PEOPLE'S SURVIVAL FUND

The government-run People's Survival Fund helps families in the Philippines adapt to climate change and shows that working with governments can succeed.

Rising temperatures and increased rainfall in the Philippines are making it harder for farmers to grow enough food to eat and sell. But now the Philippine Government's People's Survival Fund gives local authorities more than \$30 million to spend every year on initiatives such as helping fishing communities to respond to changing weather, paying for risk insurance and setting up storm warning systems. The fund came about because we called on the Philippine Government to act. Together with local partners, we helped ministers to understand the climate challenge and we built support in affected communities. Starting in 2015, the annual People's Survival Fund payments mean more people will be prepared for the future — and this national government initiative will hopefully inspire local governments, community organisations and businesses to commit to further funding in response to this crucial challenge.



Noveline Pinote (20) prepares a fishing net by the shore in Poooc. She is seven months pregnant. Oxfam is calling on the Philippine government to recognise women fisher farmers in rehabilitation efforts after Typhoon Haiyan. Photo: Tessa Bunney/Oxfam.

ABOUT OXFAM

Around the world, one person in three lives in poverty. Oxfam is determined to change that by mobilising the power of people against poverty. Globally, Oxfam works to find practical, innovative ways for people to lift themselves out of poverty and thrive. We save lives and help rebuild livelihoods when crisis strikes. And we campaign so that the voices of poor people influence the local and global decisions that affect them. In all we do, Oxfam works with partner organisations and alongside vulnerable women and men to end the injustices that cause poverty.

Oxfam Australia, a partner of the Australian Government, is an independent, not-for-profit, international development organisation. We have more than 550,000 supporters in Australia who contribute skills, time and financial support to advance our work in Australia and around the world.





Mithu Dam is the founder of Oxfam Australia Trading partner Madhya Kalikata Shilpangan based in Kolkata, India. She says the group works with poor, vulnerable women to help them stand on their feet, market their goods and send their children to school. "Give us trade, not aid," she says. Photo: Atul Loke/Panos/OxfamAUS.

Front cover: Sushanta prepares fabric ready for block and screen printing at Brindaban prints, which produces beautiful hand-crafted fabrics for Oxfam trading partner Sasha. He has worked there for ten years and says simply, "I learnt the skills I have by working with this group, I enjoy my work. Whatever I earn goes to my family." Photo: Atul Loke/Panos/OxfamAUS.

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