OXFAM IN VIET NAM 
COUNTRY PROGRAMME
2015-2019
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About Oxfam

Oxfam is a worldwide development organisation that mobilises the strength and voice of people against poverty, inequality and injustice.

Oxfam’s vision is a just world without poverty: a world in which people can influence decisions that affect their lives, enjoy their rights, and assume their responsibilities as full citizens of a world in which all human beings are valued and treated equally.

We are a confederation of 18 Oxfam organisations working together in more than 90 countries. Oxfam works with partner organisations and alongside vulnerable women and men to end injustices.

All Oxfam’s work is framed by our commitment to five broad rights-based aims:

• The right to a sustainable livelihood
• The right to basic social services
• The right to life and security
• The right to be heard
• The right to an identity
Oxfam’s first activities in Vietnam took place in 1955, when we provided humanitarian assistance. Since the late 1980s we have implemented a number of development projects across Vietnam aimed at reducing poverty. After Vietnam reached the lower-middle income benchmark in 2010, the needs of the poorest and most marginalised groups in society remain high; Oxfam’s country strategy has shifted accordingly to addressing inequality. We seek transformative changes in policies, practices and beliefs in ways that will fundamentally improve the lives of poor and marginalised women and men, and ensure that all citizens have the same opportunity to enjoy their rights.

Oxfam believes that inequality is one of the defining issues of our time. Inequality is bad for everyone. The widening gap between rich and poor weakens the capacity of economic growth to benefit all citizens and keeps poor people poor. As in other countries across the world, inequality is rising in Vietnam and the gains from economic growth are favouring better-off households. Since 2004 the richest households’ incomes have increased twice as much as those of the poorest households. Ethnic minority men, women and children make up 14 percent of Vietnam’s population and account for 70 percent of the extreme poor.

Rising economic inequality exacerbates already existing disparities, including those between women and men. Across the country, access to decent education, health care and employment is also unequal, particularly among rural and poor people. In addition, there is increasing competition over and inequitable sharing of natural resources. This affects small-scale farmers in particular, whose livelihoods depend on these resources.

Oxfam’s Vietnam country strategy (2015-2019) contributes to shaping the debate on extreme inequality in Vietnam and globally. We seek to change the current narrative that inequality is acceptable and inevitable. We work in partnership with government, civil society, businesses, communities, media, research institutions and think tanks to influence policy and practices aiming at reversing economic, gender and social inequalities.
**OUR PROGRAMMES**

Our good governance programme aims to ensure that all citizens, in particular those who are marginalised in society, have increased access to information, freedom of association, expression and media; feel confident about raising their voices; and are able to influence decisions that shape their lives and hold the government accountable.

The vision for our women’s rights programme is that poor and marginalised women, particularly women of different social and ethnic groups, gain more power over their lives and are able to contribute actively to and take leadership roles in decision-making.

Our programme on building resilience to disaster, climate risks and emergency response ensures that vulnerable people are better able to adapt to disasters and the effects of climate change, are less impacted by extreme weather events when they happen, and are able to recover more quickly from natural disasters. Humanitarian response remains a core Oxfam mandate.

The aim of our programme on sustainable food and fair sharing of natural resources is for an increasing number of marginalised smallholder producers to secure access to and control over land, water and other natural resources in order to safeguard their livelihoods.

Across the above four programmes, Oxfam promotes active citizenship through social networks. These activities include increasing youth groups’ civic awareness in contributing to an inclusive and sustainable society; women’s groups’ organising to reduce gender inequality; migrant and informal workers having capacity and confidence to claim their rights; LGBTI groups’ advocacy for laws that protect them from discrimination and violence; and promoting ethnic minority groups’ ability to discuss issues of concern and identify solutions to their own problems.

**OUR STRATEGY AND APPROACH**

- Putting women’s rights at the heart of all what we do, including the systematic use of gendered frameworks in all projects from identification and design to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation
- Leading evidence-based research to provide depth, facts and figures to inform policy and practice
- Engaging the public on issues of social concern through online and offline media
- Engaging the business sector on corporate social responsibilities and inclusive business approaches
- Engaging the Vietnamese government in its 2035 agenda to promote equity and social inclusion
- Promoting constructive partnerships among actors from multiple sectors of society, such as research institutions, NGOs, media, business, and government agencies, to cooperatively address policy and governance issues
- Supporting an enabling environment for civic participation
- Supporting local-regional-global linkages, international action and solidarity, both in terms of how the world affects Vietnam and how Vietnam affects other countries
Oxfam launched its global Even It Up campaign in October 2014 and made global headlines on the issue of inequality at the last two World Economic Forums. Oxfam continues to present the case that extreme inequality is one of the defining issues of our time.

Extreme economic inequality has exploded across the world in the last 30 years. At the start of 2016, Oxfam calculated that the richest 62 people on the planet owned as much as the poorest half. Inequality within countries is also rising rapidly. Seven out of 10 people live in countries where the gap between rich and poor is greater than it was 30 years ago.

Extreme inequality undermines growth and social progress and hinders efforts to eliminate global poverty. However, Oxfam’s experience of working in the world’s poorest communities has shown that poverty and inequality are not inevitable or accidental but are the result of deliberate policy choices. Through a number of concrete steps, inequality can be effectively addressed.

Recognising this, the Even It Up campaign is focusing on getting inequality to the top of governments’ agendas and contributing to concrete policy changes. The aim of the campaign is to shift the terms of the debate so that by 2019 there is widespread consensus among decision makers and citizens that the gap between rich elites and the rest of the population is unacceptable and that radical reforms are needed.

A number of campaign activities aim to strengthen the voices of civil society. Our objective is for a greater number of citizens and civil society organisations around the world to actively influence decision makers to pursue policies and practices that combat extreme inequality. The campaign is focused on achieving substantial policy and practice change, aiming for a number of major reforms to reverse economic, political and gender inequalities.
Vietnam is one of more than 40 countries where Oxfam is developing a national Even It Up campaign. As in other countries, inequality is rising in Vietnam, and the gains from economic growth are favouring better-off households. For example, since 2004 the richest households’ incomes have increased twice as much as those of the poorest households. There is also a growing gap between the extremely wealthy and most Vietnamese. While average GDP per capita was $1,077 in 2014, Vietnam had an estimated 195 super-rich people in 2013, up from 34 super-rich in 2003.

Inequality between the Kinh majority and many ethnic minority groups is increasing. For example, while ethnic minority men, women and children make up 14 percent of Vietnam’s population, they account for 70 percent of the extreme poor. Across the country, inequality in voice and opportunities, such as access to decent education, health care and employment, is also substantial, particularly among rural and poor people. Despite this, inequality is not yet widely reflected in policy discussions and public debates, which often emphasise the need to alleviate income poverty rather than reduce inequality between different groups.

The inequality campaign in Vietnam will run from 2016 to 2019. Oxfam promotes public debate on the need to combat extreme inequalities, raising public awareness and contributing to the formulation of policies that address inequalities. In particular, the campaign focuses on the state budget and national tax system, looking at how a fair and effective collection of revenue and spending of the state budget can help finance high-quality and equitable public services. The campaign also addresses gender inequality and promotes women’s leadership, linking with existing Oxfam projects.

In the Even It Up campaign, Oxfam is working with research institutes, think tanks, youth groups, civil society organisations and the media to generate evidence and create debates. Findings and recommendations from policy research will be presented to and disseminated through the National Assembly and government agencies.

Oxfam launched its global GROW campaign in 2011 to tackle the pervasive injustices in the global food system that mean that almost 800 million people worldwide do not have enough food to eat. The campaign recognises that a host of factors such as climate change, land acquisitions, food price spikes and intensive farming are forcing millions of people to go hungry every day. It aims to ensure that the global food production system benefits everyone, including small-scale farmers.

In Vietnam, Oxfam has been part of the GROW campaign since 2012. The campaign in Vietnam is focused on protecting smallholder farmers’ rights to natural resources, promoting their voice in policy processes and expanding their livelihood choices.

More than two-thirds of Vietnam’s population live in rural areas. Many are small-scale farmers who live in poverty or very close to the poverty line and who do not have sufficient access to food. Natural resources are also being rapidly exploited, and land, water and forest areas are all coming under increasing strain. This affects small-scale farmers whose livelihoods depend on natural resources. Finally, poor and small-scale farmers are vulnerable to natural disasters, climate change and external shocks, such as volatile market prices.

The first phase of the Vietnam GROW campaign (2012-2015) has focused on raising awareness among key stakeholders, including policy makers and farmers, of why it is important to promote smallholder farmers’ rights, choices and voice. The campaign has also worked to change the policy environment so that it provides more favourable conditions for stronger collaboration among farmers and businesses.

In 2015, this has included research on how farmers’ rights, choices and voice have been promoted through different kinds of farmer organisations. Work has also been undertaken to build greater understanding in the media of the importance of food justice and to capture the stories of small-scale farmers through, for example, media field trips, media workshops and the setting up of a network of journalists covering agricultural and rural issues.

Partly as a result of the campaign there is now a much greater public focus on the need to protect small-scale farmers. For example, there has been growing media interest and reporting on the topic. The Vietnam Fatherland Front has publically acknowledged the importance of small-scale farmers and is keen to discuss how to best protect and organise them.

The second phase of the campaign will build on existing Oxfam programmes and projects and will continue the work on policy research and advocacy, media engagement and mobilising of farmers. In particular, the campaign will focus on improvement of public and private investment to support small-scale farmers to get better access to production resources, promote their resilience to climate change and shocks and enhance their voices and choices in the agricultural production/value chains.
As part of the campaign, Oxfam is working with a number of think tanks and research institutes. The aim is to generate research that can be used for advocacy purposes, but also to build up the knowledge base of these organisations and to help them become thought leaders.

In addition, Oxfam collaborates with a network of farmer organisations and farmer leaders, helping to strengthen the network and making sure it can more effectively take part in policy debates and engage with policy makers. Oxfam also works closely with government partners, including the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD). For example, during the recent revision of the decree on farmer collaboration, MARD took on board a number of recommendations from an Oxfam-supported research report, including suggestions on diversifying farmer collaboration models. MARD has also decided to support the farmer leader network mentioned above, thereby ensuring its long-term sustainability.

The GROW campaign in Vietnam works closely with a number of other Oxfam project partners, including the agriculture coalition of the Coalition Support Programme. The GROW campaign team has worked together with the coalition to set up the Vietnam Agricultural Forum – a quarterly platform for different stakeholders, including government officials, NGOs, academics and farmers, to discuss agriculture-related topics.
Oxfam in Vietnam is One Oxfam since April 1st 2016, with the merger of all affiliates programmes and resources into one single comprehensive programme managed by one team under a single structure.

**Oxfam**

Oxfam is an international confederation of 18 organisations networked together in more than 90 countries, as part of the global movement for change, to build a future free from injustice and poverty.

- Oxfam America (www.oxfamamerica.org)
- Oxfam Australia (www.oxfam.org.au)
- Oxfam-in-Belgium (www.oxfamsol.be)
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- Oxfam France (www.oxfamfrance.org)
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- Oxfam India (www.oxfamindia.org)
- Oxfam Intermon (Spain) (www.oxfamintermon.org)
- Oxfam Ireland (www.oxfamireland.org)
- Oxfam Italy (www.oxfamitalia.org)
- IBIS (name will change to Oxfam IBIS then Oxfam Denmark) (http://ibis-global.org/)
- Oxfam Japan (www.oxfam.jp)
- Oxfam Mexico (www.oxfammexico.org)
- Oxfam New Zealand (www.oxfam.org.nz)
- Oxfam Novib (Netherlands) (www.oxfamnovib.nl)

Photos: Oxfam in Vietnam
OUR VISION

Our vision is a just world without poverty. We want a world where people are valued and treated equally, enjoy their rights as full citizens, and can influence decisions affecting their lives.