

Oxfam in Afghanistan: Programme Overview

Oxfam first provided support to projects in Afghanistan in 1964 and has been directly providing humanitarian and development assistance in the country since 1991, including during Taliban rule.

Given the widespread destruction of government institutions and facilities caused by three decades of war and disorder, Oxfam's programmes, until 2004, focused on service delivery (construction of schools, roads, and clinics), and on the provision of immediate assistance (food-for-work activities, distribution of wheat seeds). Oxfam also provided immediate assistance to people affected by the massive 1998 earthquake in Badakhshan.



Altaf Raza/ Oxfam. Cash for Work project in Central Highlands, 2006

Humanitarian Relief

Oxfam continues to respond to recurrent humanitarian emergencies in Afghanistan. In 2006-2007 Oxfam provided support in the Central highlands to respond to the impact of almost a decade of drought. Beneficiaries included the most vulnerable women headed households, the elderly, and those with disabilities. Cash-for-work activities helped people meet their basic food needs and rehabilitate community assets. This year, Oxfam is continuing its intervention in drought-affected areas to support and strengthen livelihoods.

Sustainable Livelihoods: Development Assistance

In order to move from humanitarian relief to development assistance, Oxfam is now prioritising activities that aim to empower communities, encourage community led and owned development, and build lasting skills, capacities, and institutions. Currently, Oxfam GB is implementing a livelihood programme in 65 villages of two provinces: in the Badakhshan province (north of the country), and in the Daikundi province (central highlands). Oxfam is establishing civil society groups (especially for agriculture, livestock, and horticulture) and training participants to become community trainers. Oxfam is also forming women self-help groups to encourage their economic leadership and promote increased social and economic participation at household and community levels.



Farhodi/ Oxfam: Central Highlands, needs assessment. Livelihoods programme 2006

Oxfam is conducting market feasibility studies to better link civil society groups with sustainable market mechanisms. Oxfam works closely with all key stakeholders, including local government officials and other coordination bodies.

Oxfam facilitates the National Solidarity Programme in 400 communities in six districts in Daikundi, supporting development projects led by elected community councils. From 2001-2007, Oxfam implemented a rural development and water and sanitation project in Kandahar where it extended the water distribution network, built sanitation facilities, provided vocational training to women and trained the local authorities in improving provision and management of safe water and sanitation facilities and services to the people.



Vrinda Dar/ Oxfam, Badakhshan, Women's Shura, 2007

Gender Equity and Mainstreaming

In accordance with its mandate in gender equity, Oxfam makes gender a key component of all its programmes, strengthens local women's organisations and works together with alliances to reduce domestic violence against women through the 'We Can' campaign. This campaign mobilises Change Makers at the village level who build awareness and help bring about change in people's attitudes, behaviour, and practices towards domestic violence. Oxfam partners with several local gender-specific NGOs to build their capacities to reach out to victims of domestic violence. Gender equity and gender mainstreaming are integral to all of Oxfam's programmes.

Advocacy Initiatives

Oxfam's advocacy programmes in Afghanistan seek to achieve policy change to reduce poverty, promote rural development, support infrastructure reconstruction, and encourage stability. Oxfam has produced comprehensive briefing papers advocating for stronger arms controls, greater resources for and reform of the education system, international trade policies that support poverty reduction, and increased and more effective international assistance to Afghanistan. Oxfam urges for greater protection of civilians in the course of military operations and insecure environments, and for greater support for the poor and vulnerable, including refugees, displaced people, and those suffering from humanitarian disasters. Oxfam also advocates for greater support for peace building at the local level and for increased support for agriculture. For more information on our advocacy work, please see the following reports: http://www.oxfam.org/en/news/pressreleases2006/pr061127_education; The recommendations in Oxfam's Education report have been integrated into the Government's national Education Policy. http://www.oxfam.org/en/news/2007/pr070628_afghanistan_wto_accession; This informed key actors of the consequences of early accession to WTO. http://www.oxfam.org.uk/applications/blogs/pressoffice/2008/01/open_letter_to_gordon_brown_on.html; This work aimed to hold donors accountable for the aid they give to Afghanistan.

Oxfam Novib

Oxfam International is a confederation of 13 Oxfam affiliates, working together to find lasting solutions to poverty and injustice. Oxfam GB and Oxfam Novib have significant presence in Afghanistan. Oxfam Novib is seeking to build the skills, outreach, and capacities of Afghan civil society. Financial, managerial, and other support is provided to 15 Afghan NGOs that work throughout the country. These NGOs have programmes in rural development (livelihoods, food and income security, agriculture and community-based disaster risk reduction), as well as in health, education, women's rights, peace building, and protection.

Way Forward

Oxfam has recently reviewed its country strategy for working in Afghanistan. The following four programme areas will our focus: Livelihoods; Humanitarian; Gender and Advocacy - across the country to reach out to the most vulnerable and marginalised. Oxfam intends to work with and build the capacity of local partners, working closely with the government and other development actors to integrate new approaches and activities, e.g. social forestry, social water management, women's economic leadership, alternative energy sources, Self Help Groups.