

CASE STUDY 3:

Oxfam Australia's Advocacy on a Just Transition

Oxfam Australia work towards transformational change to the systems and power structures within public, private and NGO sectors in Australia, and the countries in which it implements its programs. Oxfam Australia's policy and advocacy initiatives discourage emissions intensive activities and promote transition to a clean energy future. This case study describes Oxfam Australia's approach to advocacy for a 'just energy transition' contributing to emissions reduction and low carbon development.

LOCATION:

Australia and the countries in which Oxfam Australia works, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Indonesia, Jordan, Laos, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Syria, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, Tonga and Yemen.

ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVE:

Oxfam Australia aims to tackle inequality and injustice, which are complex and interrelated systemic problems that cause poverty. The organisation works towards the vision of creating a just and sustainable world without inequalities that contribute to poverty.

LINKS TO ACFID CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK:

- POLICY AND ADVOCACY
- Global emissions reduction

DEMONSTRATION OF ENABLERS:

- 1: Multi-year, core funding and flexible funding options
- 2: Partnerships, relationships, and knowledge exchange
- 3: Ongoing and holistic approach
- 4: Prioritising climate change action within organisations
- 5: Strength-based approaches, recognising traditional and local knowledge
- 6: Recognising the 'what' and 'how' of climate change integration

CLIMATE CHANGE INTEGRATION APPROACH

Oxfam Australia's integration of climate change has been established by embedding climate justice as one of the key components of inequality and injustice, that align with their organisational values. Oxfam Australia actively engages with media, political processes, and diverse stakeholders in Australia and in the countries where programs are implemented, advocating for changes that address climate injustice through knowledge sharing and thought leadership. Six specific areas that Oxfam Australia has focused their advocacy efforts for a 'just transition' (see Box 3) are provided below.

Oxfam Australia has developed a coordinated and strategic advocacy approach to a 'just transition'. Oxfam Australia's Climate Justice Thematic Strategy 2021 – 2025 outlines how programs are linked to policy, advocacy and campaigns. A key aspect of strategic advocacy is therefore linking advocacy efforts to programs on the ground, as well as building relationships (see below), and providing thought leadership. Oxfam Australia is currently organising forums and roundtables that they organise and facilitate, where voices from Pacific (mostly young people) and First Nations representatives are present to share their perspectives (Enabler 5). Members of Parliament (MPs), other government representatives and cross-bench members are invited to hear these voices. Experiences of community members' impacts



Photo: Muhammad, 27, water bureau head in Ararso says, standing next to the 56-panel solar array that Oxfam installed and now powers the system. Photo credit: Petterik Wiggers / Oxfam.

of climate change are shared at roundtables, and they have the opportunity to share their vision for the solutions. This approach leaves more of an impact on the audience, as they can hear directly from communities.



Oxfam Australia recognises the strong interplay between programs and advocacy efforts... Part of what Oxfam does is bring in local stories and experiences of community on the ground to decision makers. Impacted communities know the best solutions they need."

Oxfam Australia's Policy and Advocacy Lead.

Advocacy through thought leadership is also offered through policy papers that bring together our program's experiences with innovative and ethically grounded policy thinking, and through partnerships with academics on climate justice issues, e.g. a current advocacy position paper being drafted in collaboration with UNSW on Australia's obligations to a just transition.

BOX 3: OXFAM'S DEFINITION OF A 'JUST TRANSITION'

Just and fair transitions can best be characterised as moving from where we are today towards an environmentally sustainable economy that is no longer reliant on fossil fuel energy and contributes to decent work for all, social inclusion, and the eradication of poverty. It is a systemic and whole-of-economy approach to sustainability that aims to reduce the impact of job losses and industry phaseout on workers and communities, while producing green and decent jobs and industries, and healthy communities. This includes strategies that democratise, decentralise and diversify economic activity, while redistributing resources and power from traditional forms of energy generation, distribution and consumption. (Source: Oxfam's Climate Justice Strategy)

Focusing on long term relationships with key individuals, such as Members of Parliament, helps keep climate change on the agenda of the government. Oxfam Australia recognises the importance of building a relationship and trust with MPs (Enabler 2). There are different objectives of these relationships. For example, Oxfam Australia prides itself as a reliable voice with accurate climate data (see below), and they can support MPs to champion climate change issues with confidence and legitimacy. Oxfam Australia also uses their reputation in using data to tackle inequality to hold MPs and the government to account, for example, on climate finance including for a Just Energy Transition. Oxfam Australia strives to find a balance between holding MPs accountable and acknowledging their strengths and accomplishments so far.



Building relationships with MPs who might become the champions for the issues you are advocating on is key. If they become passionate about an issue, they will help keep the issue on the agenda in parliament or in the government.”

Oxfam Australia’s Policy and Advocacy Lead.

Using parliamentary and government processes to influence the public discourse in Australia. Oxfam Australia recognises that there are many parliamentary tools to support advocacy efforts for a just energy transition. For example, Oxfam Australia regularly write submissions and speak at parliamentary inquiries, respond to consultations, and provide pre-budget submissions on the Federal Budget. These approaches provide a message to government that climate change remains on the public agenda, and are tools that the development sector can utilise to advocate for meaningful change around climate issues (Enabler 6).

Maintaining a focus on facts, data and clearly presented information focused on climate finance and Australia’s fair share of climate action. Oxfam Australia is renowned for compiling and presenting data to draw attention to inequalities. Data, facts and case examples help Oxfam Australia connect at a personal level and draw attention to what more is needed to reduce inequalities.



At Oxfam we put equality at the centre of our work. We analyse things from the perspective of reducing inequality and poverty, as well as justice, which leads back into the sense of responsibility. We highlight inequality in emissions and impacts, and the need to respond in an equitable way that contributes our fair share.”

Oxfam Australia’s Policy and Advocacy Lead.

Supporting affiliate countries with their approach to advocacy. Oxfam Australia recognises that some affiliate countries have limited civil society space, while others have more scope towards government advocacy. Support is offered by Oxfam International to national bodies (e.g. through our Climate Finance Shadow Reports), providing them with statistics and information at national and international level to present to their government. The data allows the affiliate country offices to advocate more effectively. In some Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Oxfam can also be an important source of information for the government to strengthen their negotiations, helping LDCs to develop their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which include adaptation and loss and damage.



We try and support national offices so they can do effective advocacy. A lot of countries don’t have the capacity to do the high level analysis themselves. So by providing national and global level data – offices can use it to advocate at their country level.”

Oxfam Australia’s Policy and Advocacy Lead.

Joint advocacy efforts are supported by strength in numbers. Oxfam Australia join with other organisations and networks for a collaborative and coordinated message on a just transition (Enabler 2). Oxfam Australia works in alliance with the Climate Action Network Australia (CANA) International Working Group as well as ActionAid, Caritas, and Edmund Rice – to name a few.



The fact that so many people are talking about a particular issue – a chorus of voices, shows that there is strong community sentiment. The more of us that speak up, the better – strength in numbers.”

Oxfam Australia’s Policy and Advocacy Lead.

LESSONS FOR NGOS FROM SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES OF OXFAM’S ADVOCACY ON ‘A JUST TRANSITION’

Link advocacy efforts to organisational policies and programs. Doing so creates a coordinated and coherent approach to advocacy, with examples and successes from communities able to be a key part of the advocacy story being told.

Create an approach to advocacy that aligns with organisational strengths. Organisations need to develop their own unique approach to advocacy, depending on their organisational context. NGOs have strengths in their program work that they

can bring to an advocacy perspective and find their niche on which to focus advocacy efforts.

Working in alliances and networks helps to amplify key messages and build momentum towards a just transition. Many NGOs are largely ‘singing to the same song sheet’ when it comes to advocacy on climate justice, including on a just transition. Working together in joint advocacy approaches can amplify the message to government and the media of the urgency of the changes that are needed – and the solutions that are available now. ACFID’s Climate Policy and Practice Community, and CANA’s International Working Group are two examples of alliances advocating for change on a just transition.

Utilising parliamentary and government processes to support advocacy efforts. Oxfam Australia recognise the influence that parliamentary tools and government processes can have on shaping public discourse around a just transition. By understanding and utilising these processes and leveraging available tools, NGOs can more effectively advocate for their cause.

CONCLUSION

Oxfam Australia’s approach to advocacy on a just transition involves multiple coordinated entry points, that leverage successful lessons from projects at local level in the countries in which they work. Advocacy within Australia aims to influence the public discourse using data and case examples to politicians and the media, as well as through position papers presenting evidence of what Australia’s fair share of climate finance for the Just Energy Transition should be. Advocacy in affiliate countries supports Oxfam country offices, as well as partner governments, with accurate data to strengthen negotiation efforts at international forums. NGOs in the sector can learn from Oxfam Australia’s tailored advocacy approach, and build their own approach based on the unique organisational focus and strengths.