INEQUALITY TOOLKIT

A GUIDE TO INFLUENCING FOR INEQUALITY REDUCTION

OXFAM

ABOUT THIS INEQUALITY TOOLKIT

THE HIGH COST OF INEQUALITY

Globally and in many countries, **economic inequality – the gap between the richest and the rest of society – is at alarmingly high levels and often rising**. Inequality of wealth is far more concentrated than inequality of income. This inequality is preventing the eradication of poverty and hunger, preventing the realization of our rights, and driving climate breakdown. It is undermining our societies and corroding our politics, as wealth buys power, it buys politicians and buys influence. It is feeding and fuelling other inequalities, divisions and hatreds, such as the rise in racism or misogyny.

THIS TOOLKIT

Conversely, **greater economic *equality* is the foundation of all progress**. For over ten years, Oxfam has organized its work around dismantling inequality and power concentration. Over this time, we have together built our understanding of inequality and what is required to fight for a more equal world. Today the fight against inequality is more urgent than ever before. This updated toolkit aims to equip Oxfam staff and allies with the skills necessary to scale up their efforts to tackle inequality at the national level. It enables them to analyse and make demands regarding national inequality levels and how we must see concrete plans to reduce them. It includes details about policies and actions proven to reduce inequality, for example on public services, taxation, climate, workers' rights, debt and gender.

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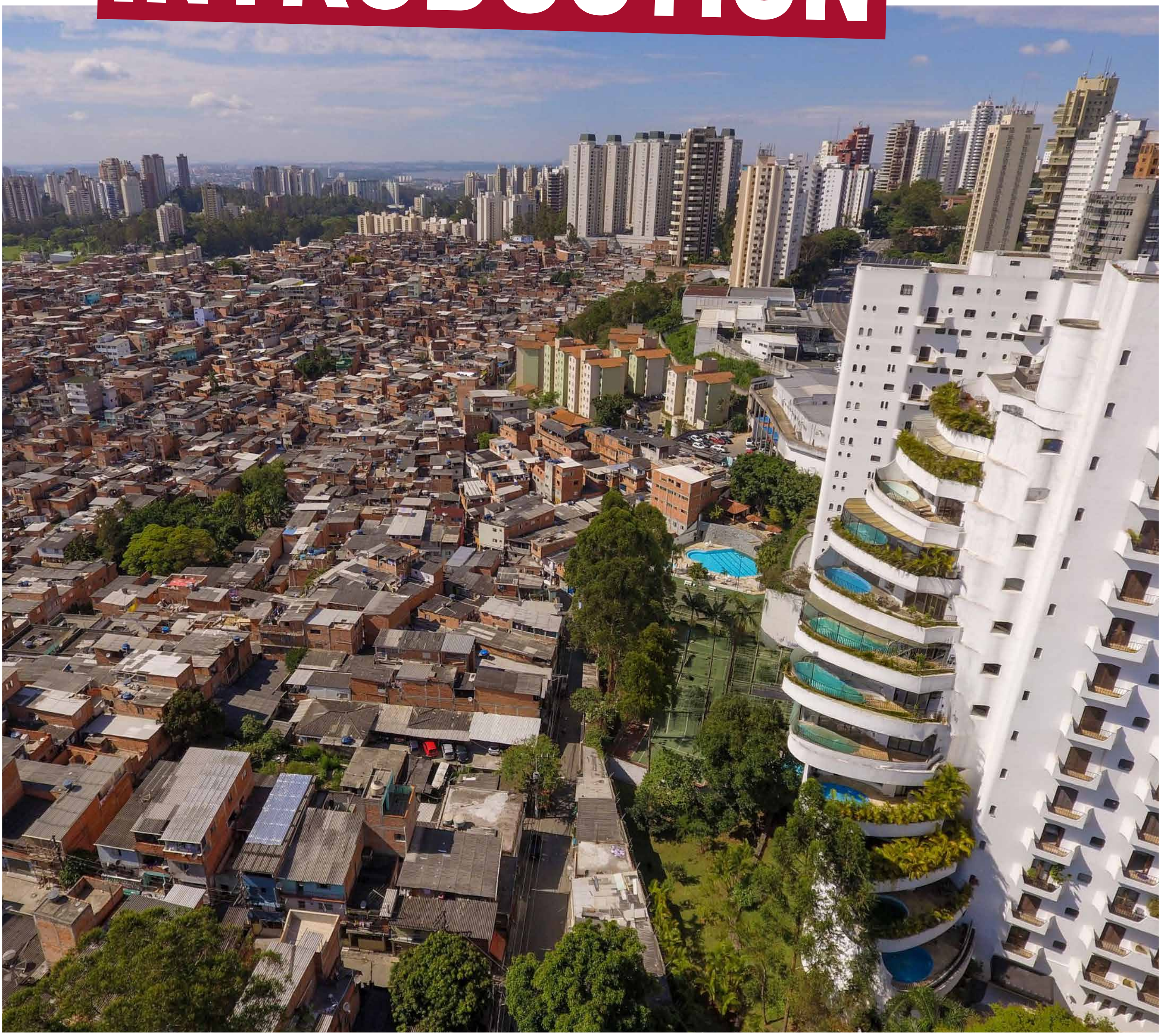
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION



1. INTRODUCTION

We live in a world where the rich grow richer while billions live in poverty and hunger, and are denied their rights to education, health and decent work. **Economic inequality fuels exclusion, erodes rights and freedoms, and obstructs meaningful progress for humanity**. It feeds and fuels the growth in other inequalities and divisions such as racism and misogyny. The super-rich class is also driving our planet towards climate catastrophe through excessive carbon use, and inequality means that ordinary people everywhere are experiencing the greatest impacts of climate breakdown.

Without greater economic equality, progress towards a fairer and more sustainable world will not be possible. **Greater economic equality is the foundation of all progress**. The good news is that – because inequality is a choice – more equal societies are possible. There are many great examples of countries and regions that have rapidly reduced economic inequality. The further good news is that with greater equality, it is possible for all of humanity to prosper whilst stopping climate breakdown and living within the boundaries of our planet.

Creating this more equal world requires dismantling structural systems of exclusion, oppression and exploitation that enable a privileged few to benefit at the expense of ordinary people, women and marginalized groups. It requires governments, as duty bearers, to take bold action through policies like public ownership, market regulation, progressive taxation, labour policy, investment in public services and a just transition away from fossil fuels. It requires them to minimise the influence of wealth and power on politics, and instead create and protect spaces for civil society to meaningfully engage in decision-making.

Oxfam campaigns for governments and institutions to act now to break vicious cycles of inequality and build radically more economically equal societies. We challenge the status quo by exposing regressive policies that drive inequality; we present progressive solutions; and we support people and organizations to build their power and voice to demand change. We also work to address the clear two-way link between economic inequality, patriarchy and other intersecting systems of oppression, including colonialism and racism.

1.1 PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit has been produced to make a practical contribution to the growing global movement that is fighting for an end to extreme inequality. It builds on previous Oxfam resources and guides and contains the most recent contextual and policy analysis. We hope that it will be very helpful as a starting point for action. Further tools and documents are listed in **Annex 1**.

This document is a practical and action-oriented toolkit, taking a journey from understanding the problem to identifying priorities and designing strategies for action. It comprises:

- **Chapter 2: What is inequality and why does it matter?** This chapter explores how inequality affects rights, wellbeing and social justice.
- **Chapter 3: What are our demands on reducing inequality?** This chapter highlights some of the overarching commitments governments must make.
- **Chapters 4–9: Strategic areas for tackling inequality.** These chapters provide recent evidence and analysis, and raise some of the key changes necessary in the strategic areas of 1) people power and countering elite capture; 2) public services; 3) progressive finance; 4) labour rights; 5) climate and 6) land, food and agriculture.
- **Chapter 10: Taking action on inequality.** This chapter focuses on effective influencing strategies.
- **Chapter 11: The five pillars of influencing.** This chapter takes the reader from analysis to action, providing tools to develop and implement effective influencing strategies. It covers the five interlocking pillars of influencing on inequality: 1) alliance building; 2) capacity exchange; 3) research and policy engagement; 4) advocacy and opportunity; and 5) campaigns, media and public engagement.
- **Chapter 12: Bringing it all together.** This concluding chapter discusses how change happens when strategy, data, analysis, alliances, evidence and mobilization all slot into place.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS INEQUALITY AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

2. WHAT IS INEQUALITY AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

2.1 WHAT IS INEQUALITY?

Inequality refers to the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities within or between groups; e.g., disparities within a country or between countries, or economic differences between men and women. When the difference between the 'haves' and 'have nots' is excessive, and when the lion's share of resources and opportunities are concentrated in the hands of a few people, there are corrosive consequences for the whole of society.

In particular, extreme levels of wealth are deeply dangerous for society. This is because wealth, more than income, translates into power and influence. It shapes and directs a society. It entrenches unfairness across generations. More often than not, extreme wealth has not been earned through hard work. Instead, the majority is due to rigged rules and laws – such as abuse of monopoly power, cronyism and inheritance – that perpetuate a vicious cycle of ever more wealth for a rich elite.[1]

Inequality has colonial roots, and neocolonial structures still stand in the way of progress.[2] Decades after the end of the historical colonial period, our global economy is still structured in ways that lead to wealth flowing from the Global South to the Global North, and more specifically from ordinary people in the Global South to the richest people in the Global North. Within many Global South countries, continued levels of very high inequality today have their roots in colonialism- for example through the extreme concentration of land ownership.

Broadly speaking, there are three different types of inequality that overlap and interact with each other:

- **Economic inequality.** The unequal distribution of income, wealth, resources and assets like land. Examples include significant gaps between the top and bottom earners, and high concentrations of wealth and assets in the hands of a rich minority. This economic inequality in turn is translated into social and political inequality.
- **Social inequality.** The way that economic inequality can translate into differences in social outcomes between groups, including life expectancy, employment opportunities, and health and education outcomes. People at the bottom experience economic inequality through shorter lives, worse health, poorer education, greater exposure to crime and other social problems. The richest people often live as much as 10-15 years longer than the poorest.3 Women, girls, non-binary people, migrants and racialised communities disproportionately experience these impacts of economic inequality. They are even more likely to experience precarious work, unequal pay, unpaid and underpaid care responsibilities, and exclusion from decision-making, as economic inequality interacts with these other inequalities.
- **Political inequality.** Economic inequality very often becomes political inequality; the imbalance of political power, meaningful participation, and opportunities to shape the policies and practices that govern our lives and societies. Examples include when rich elites use money and connections to influence elections and policies, and when people experiencing poverty and discrimination are excluded from voting or influence over policies and decisions that shape their lives. Together with a rise in the political power of the richest, we see an erosion of political power for the majority, with sharply growing authoritarianism and crackdowns on people's civil and political rights worldwide.

These inequalities reinforce each other. For example, a child from a poor household faces more barriers to education – such as unaffordable school costs and poor nutrition – than a child from a well-off family. This creates educational inequality, affects lifelong earnings and employment opportunities, and thus exacerbates economic inequality and intergenerational poverty. If that poor child is a girl, she will have even less educational opportunities than a poor boy. At the other end of the spectrum, political elites have excessive influence over politics, allowing them to capture decision-making and skew public policy in their own interests, further increasing their wealth and power.

Individuals and groups experience intersecting inequalities, which further fuel economic inequality. Some people are caught in traps of disadvantage, where multiple factors diminish their capabilities, while others are elevated by multiple advantages. For example, a woman living in poverty is more likely than a man to be excluded from education and to lack an identification document, which are significant barriers to decent work and political participation. If that woman living in poverty is also from an ethnic or religious group subject to discrimination, they are likely to face even greater exclusion and reduced opportunities, and even greater political and economic impoverishment. Women, girls, non-binary people and racialised communities are also more likely to be kept out of educational opportunities and formal employment because they shoulder a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work. On the other hand, a rich white man from the Global North benefits from multiple advantages due to their income, race, geography and gender, further enhancing their access to money and power.

Policy and practices that drive *vertical* inequality also drive other *horizontal* inequalities such as gender and race. This guide is predominantly about *vertical* inequalities- that is, inequalities between rich and poor individuals and households. These vertical inequalities, in turn, interact with, fuel, and feed off *horizontal* inequalities[4]. A horizontal inequality is one between different culturally defined groups- for example, race, ethnicity, religion or gender. Such group-based inequalities are clearly wrong and must also be fought and overcome, and Oxfam campaigns to do this too, through our gender rights and justice campaign. Equally, in every country, vertical inequality both drives and is driven by different horizontal inequalities, whether it is gender, race or other identified groups. Understanding them together and fighting them together is imperative.

2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

There are five main reasons why Oxfam has chosen to organize a major pillar of influencing work around economic inequality.

The first is the dangerous levels and dramatic increases in economic inequality across the world. Economic inequality, whether of wealth or income, is extremely high in most countries, and in many it has also risen sharply in recent decades. This trend is deeply concerning and undermines efforts to make progress in tackling other forms of inequality. We have to fight to turn this dangerous trend around and create a more equal world.

BOX 1: FOCUSING ON INEQUALITY VS FOCUSING ON POVERTY

Many NGOs focus on poverty and not on inequality. A focus on poverty is vital. It is not enough, though, as it only focuses on those at the bottom of society. This is important, but not sufficient.

Conversely, a focus on inequality looks at the unequal distribution of income, wealth, opportunities or power across individuals or groups in a society. **Inequality focuses not just on those who have *too little* but also examines why some individuals have *too much* and what their power can do.**

By looking at the 'haves' as well as the 'have nots', we can ask more difficult structural questions about the distribution of wealth, income and power in a society. **A focus only on poverty is more one of charity; a focus on inequality is one of justice.**

The interaction between poverty and inequality is also important. Ending poverty in countries with very high inequality is harder. High levels of inequality slow poverty reduction because economic benefits are disproportionately captured by wealthy people who may also have the power to block redistributive policies.[5]

Second, it is evident that **significantly reducing economic inequality will allow us to eliminate poverty faster**. The World Bank projects that reducing inequality can triple the speed of poverty reduction.[6] IMF research finds that high inequality weakens long-term and sustainable economic growth, and macroeconomic stability, both necessary to eliminate poverty.[7] Policies that boost economic equality, like free universal public services and progressive taxation, are also essential to overcoming poverty and equalizing opportunity. Regressive policies like excessive tax breaks for the richest people exacerbate economic inequality and hollow out public services, undermining rights, poverty reduction and social mobility.

Third, it is clear that economic inequality is driving **social inequality** everywhere- richer people have access to better healthcare, better schools, safer neighbourhoods. They live longer lives. In more economically unequal societies, trust and happiness are lower, crime is higher, and environmental problems are worse.[8] Equal societies are the core foundation of progress in human wellbeing- in all measures of what really matters in our lives: our happiness; our health; our families; our communities; and our world.

Fourth, today's huge gap between the richest and the rest is driving dangerous levels of **political inequality**. The latter is becoming a serious barrier to progressive change, undermining the freedoms and rights of the majority. A super-rich class with inordinate access to power is emerging – billionaires are 4,000 times more likely to hold political office than ordinary citizens.[9] At the same time, there is a politically poor majority whose rights and voices are suppressed, and who lack any real power over their lives or governments. Research finds that economic inequality is one of the strongest predictors of democratic backsliding.[10] More equal countries are far less politically polarized and authoritarian.[11] Women, especially those facing intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization, experience additional barriers to political participation, leadership and civic engagement. Economic inequality therefore intersects with gender oppression to deepen democratic exclusion.

Fifth, **the existence of inequality is driving the climate crisis and its impacts**. For many years, climate change and its impacts were seen as separate from inequality- a core objective of Oxfam's work is to overturn this misperception and show that the inequality crisis is driving the climate crisis, and vice-versa[12]. The extreme and disproportionate greenhouse gas emissions of the world's super-rich – through their consumption and investment – are burning through our remaining carbon budget, i.e., the amount of carbon dioxide equivalent that can be emitted before we breach the critical 1.5°C threshold of global warming. If everyone in the world emitted as much as those in the top 1%, the world's remaining carbon budget would be gone in under five months.[13] This direct impact is compounded by the political power of super-rich people, which allows them to block climate action in favour of their own interests. At the same time, economic inequality dictates who feels the impacts of climate breakdown- the extreme weather, the crop losses, the damage- all of this is felt more by the poorest countries and the poorest people. Conversely, more equal societies are much better equipped to cope with the rapid shocks and changes and risks that climate breakdown is bringing.

In addition to these core problems with economic inequality, high levels of economic inequality make progress in addressing other inequalities much less likely and much more difficult. Women, racialized and marginalized groups tend to be treated much more unequally and suffer far more in countries where economic inequality is high.[14] When there is a big gap between rich people and the rest of society, these groups suffer the most economically, whilst it is men, and often rich white men, who benefit predominantly.

> We are at the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of endless economic growth. How dare you?
> Greta Thunberg, climate activist[15]

Racism, xenophobia and misogyny are also used to fuel division more in such societies, to divide and distract from high economic inequality. Conversely, more economically equal societies are societies that are also much more likely to have greater gender equality and less racism and marginalization, and are instead societies where everyone is treated more equally and more fairly.

2.3 THE EXTENT OF ECONOMIC INEQUALITY- WHEN IS ECONOMIC INEQUALITY TOO HIGH?

The gap between the richest people and the rest of society is enormous- far bigger than most people realise. Between and within many countries – both developed and developing – inequality is very high and often rising.

- World Inequality Database figures show that, between 1980 and 2024, 42.4% of all new wealth created globally went to the richest 1%, compared to just 1% to the bottom 50%. That means that for every dollar of new wealth created in the world, 42 cents went into the pockets of the richest 1%, whilst only 1 cent was spread among the bottom half of humanity.[16]

- Over 71% of the global population lives in countries where the gap between the share of wealth going to the richest 1% and bottom 50% widened between 1980 and 2024.[17]
- In March 2026 there were more than 3,400 billionaires in the world, with a combined wealth of more than US$20.1tn.[18] Both of these figures are at record levels.

2.4 MEASUREMENT OF INEQUALITY

There are various measures of inequality that reveal different things and can augment analysis.[19] Income inequality is much more likely to be reported on and measured than wealth inequality.

The standard measure of inequality used by all nations is called the Gini coefficient, where 0 is perfect equality, and 1 is perfect inequality. A very equal country like Norway has an income Gini of 0.27 (as of 2023), and a very unequal country like South Africa has a Gini of 0.54 (as of 2022).[20] The World Bank recently defined high inequality as a Gini coefficient of 0.4 or above, medium inequality as between 0.3 and 0.4, and low inequality as below 0.3.[21]

Gini coefficient can also be applied to wealth inequality. Inequality of wealth is invariably much higher than that of income. For example, in the UK, the Gini coefficient of income in 2022 was 0.36, but the Gini coefficient of wealth was 0.59[22].

Another popular measure of inequality used by Oxfam is the ratio between the incomes of the top 10% and the bottom 40%, known as the Palma ratio[23]. This is much easier to understand. A Palma of one means the top 10% get the same income as the bottom 40%. One study shows that this equates to a Gini of around 0.23.[24]

Oxfam's policy is that all governments should aim for a Palma of 1- where the richest 10% have an income the same as the bottom 40%. So not complete equality but a much lower level of economic inequality. Governments need to set timebound, measurable targets to reduce economic inequality to this level (**Chapter 3**).

Inequality also exists between countries too, and between the whole global population- and here the measures are the same. This is known as global inequality. The Gini coefficient for global inequality is around 0.6 as of 2022[25]- or the equivalent of the most unequal countries on earth. This reflects the legacy of colonialism and ongoing neo-colonial economic systems that advantage rich people in rich countries. Using the Palma ratio, in 2024 the richest 10% of people worldwide had 33 times as much income (pre-tax) as the bottom 40%.[26] **Oxfam's policy is the same for the Global level too- globally incomes should converge to a Palma of 1, so that the richest 10% of people in the world should have no more income than the bottom 40%.**

There are also many other ways to measure inequality[27]. What is critical to remember is that it is widely agreed[28] that **the key feature of all official estimates of inequality is that they are structurally underestimated**, and, for many countries, very out of date. They are based on household surveys, which are often carried out only every few years. Rich people rarely answer surveys. This means that estimates of top incomes are way lower than they are in reality. Various new tools are available to augment this data and show the wealth and incomes of the top 1%, for instance using rich lists, or lists of billionaires. But these are not yet standardised or widely in used by governments- but they can be very useful. Oxfam uses them to create "killer" facts that capture the public imagination and show the real scale of inequality in a country, as well as the trends. Thus, official levels of inequality might be static or falling, but top income shares could in fact be rising, meaning the official measures could be masking the real picture.

For most countries in the Global South outside of Latin America, measures of income inequality are based on consumption and not income. This often has the effect of underestimating inequality[29]. Using the consumption measure, India has a Gini of 0.26[30] (as of 2022), making it supposedly more equal than Norway. But using income, its Gini is 0.61[31], higher than South Africa.

A core part of your work can be advocacy for better, more timely data from national authorities on the scale and trends of economic inequality in your country. Timely data on economic inequality enable them to target systematic reductions and model the impact of proposed policies on inequality. For instance, they can model what will happen to inequality if they remove VAT exemptions or introduce free healthcare.

2.5 WHERE TO FIND DATA ON INEQUALITY

While data on inequality remain scarce and underestimate inequality, there has been an improvement in recent years. Some of the best sources are:

1. The **World Inequality Database (WID)**,[32] which has income and wealth distribution estimates for all countries. It combines survey, fiscal, administrative and survey data. This is where you will find estimates of the top 1%, top 10% etc.
2. **UNU WIDER's World Income Inequality Database**,[33] which has comprehensive data on income inequality- you can find estimates of the top 1% etc here too.
3. The **World Bank's Poverty and Inequality Platform (PIP)**,[34] which provides harmonized household survey data on poverty and income inequality, in particular Gini and income shares by decile.
4. The OECD's **Income and Wealth Distribution Databases**,[35] which has data on income and wealth distribution covering member states and a few non-OECD countries.
5. The **Luxembourg Income Study**,[36] which contains the largest income database of harmonized microdata spanning over half a century and covering about 50 countries (as of 2026). It also has cross-national microdata on wealth. However, its datasets require registration to access and can be challenging for non-technical users.
6. **National statistical offices**, which often provide data on inequality, especially from household surveys in developing countries. They often do this in partnership with the World Bank in your country.

CHAPTER 3
OXFAM'S DEMANDS ON INEQUALITY

3. OXFAM'S DEMANDS ON INEQUALITY

Oxfam believes that all countries, and our world, should be radically more equal, and that this is the absolute foundation of a safe, sustainable future that is based on care, dignity and shared prosperity for all. We call it the 'human economy'. In a human economy, governments target a radical reduction in inequality. The state plays an active, caring and capable role, regulating the private sector and the labour market, guaranteeing universal public services, redistributing wealth and income through progressive taxation, and ensuring economies work for the majority. It allows people to live and thrive within planetary boundaries. In a human economy, power is accountable to people.

3.1 NATIONAL INEQUALITY REDUCTION PLANS

Delivering a human economy will be impossible without a radical and rapid reduction in economic inequality.

Oxfam calls on all governments to put in place realistic and time-bound National Inequality Reduction Plans (NIRPs) to achieve this rapid reduction. Just as countries need Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to deliver on their climate change commitments under the Paris Agreement, they should use NIRPs to deliver on their commitment to meet much greater equality. NIRPs must be developed through collaboration between citizens, civil society, governments and parliamentary groups. They should identify current and target levels of inequality, and state how soon the reduction can be achieved.

We recommend that NIRPs target Gini coefficients below 0.3, the World Bank's definition of 'low inequality',[37] and ideally nearer to 0.2, and a Palma ratio of no more than 1 (i.e., where the total income of the richest 10% is no more than the total income of the poorest 40%). NIRPs should also develop and champion new measures of human progress and wellbeing, beyond the flawed metric of GDP (see **Box 2**).

Achieving this is only possible if governments address the systemic causes of inequality. They should implement policies such as taxing the super-rich (**Chapter 6**), curbing corporate and political capture by elites (**Chapter 4**), raising wages and defending labour rights (**Chapter 7**), and providing free high-quality public services and social protection for all (**Chapter 5**).

The impact of policies included in NIRPs on a country's Gini coefficient and Palma ratio must be monitored annually. This requires a revolution in inequality data. For many countries, this is patchy and unreliable and tends to underestimate the extent of inequality. Governments must therefore invest in quality and timely inequality data, combining household surveys with administrative and tax data. They must also disaggregate other data by income and wealth; for example, income inequality between men and women, or educational access between the poorest and the richest in society.

BOX 2: ECONOMIC EQUALITY AND MEASURING PROGRESS BEYOND GDP

Along with many others, Oxfam supports ending the total emphasis on the flawed goal of GDP and putting in place new measures of progress that focus on human wellbeing and planetary health at the heart of public policy. These measures must account for essential contributions such as underpaid and unpaid care work, which is disproportionately done by women and marginalized people.

> Women contribute an estimated 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work every day, adding at least US$10.8tn in value to the global economy, which is three times the financial value of the global tech industry.

More equal societies are the foundation stone of going beyond GDP and achieving these new goals of wellbeing and planetary flourishing- it will be impossible to achieve progress on these unless we make our societies radically more economically equal and fast.

3.2 AUDITING INEQUALITY IN YOUR COUNTRY

It is vital to have a strong understanding of the scale of economic inequality in your country, and how it interacts with other inequalities, and people's lived realities.

A strong country-level inequality audit combines quantitative data – for instance, from household surveys conducted by national statistical agencies or global databases such as the WID – with qualitative evidence that captures how inequality is lived and perceived.

It should form the basis of your **Country Inequality Report** too- a comprehensive picture of what economic inequality means for people in your country and what can be done about it.

Its analysis should start with practical questions to help map both the **outcomes** of inequality – such as gaps in income, health, education and civic participation – and the **drivers** that sustain them, including regressive taxation, cuts in public spending, labour market dynamics, elite capture, influence from the international financial institutions, wealthy foreign investors and intersecting discrimination. This combined analysis helps identify which inequalities are most urgent or symbolic, where policy and power changes are most needed to shift and where the political openings lie.[38,39]

The different dimensions of inequality can be analysed in a structured way based on the domains of lived experience:[40]

1. life and health;
2. physical and legal security;
3. education and learning;
4. work and financial security;
5. living conditions;
6. participation and voice; and
7. social and family life.

Thus, an inequality audit helps **map inequality across core thematic areas:** wages and work, taxation, unpaid care, land, climate and voice. It should begin with a broad dashboard scan and then go deeper where inequality is greatest.[41] **Combining statistical evidence with lived-experience methods** such as participatory dialogues, stories or citizen scorecards will ensure that advocacy reflects people's realities, with particular attention to including the voices of those most affected by inequality and exclusion.[42] All data should be disaggregated by income, gender, age, disability and rural/urban region, and include locally relevant identities such as ethnicity or caste. Influencing is rarely linear or static, so it is recommended to regularly reflect and review the influencing approaches.[43]

CHAPTER 4
PEOPLE POWER AND CAPTURING THE ELITE

4. PEOPLE POWER AND COUNTERING ELITE CAPTURE

Every struggle for equality is a struggle for power – for the right to be heard, to participate and to shape decisions that affect our lives. Inequality increases when power is captured by elites, civic space is restricted, and the poorest are locked out of decision-making. When a few people control the rules, democracy weakens, trust collapses and division deepens.[44] When people organize, participate and demand accountability, inequality can be dismantled.

This chapter explores how power is captured and how it can be reclaimed by protecting civic space, confronting elite influence and amplifying citizens' voices in decision-making.

This requires influencing strategies that build people's power to shape policy and practice, and ensure governance and economic justice advocacy are working together. In practical terms, this might mean:

- building campaigns that push for the redistribution of wealth and power;
- advocating for governments to implement participatory mechanisms for policymaking; and/or
- supporting women's, youth and grassroots movements.

4.1 WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WE NEED TO CONFRONT?

Civic space is under sustained attack, with more than two thirds of the world's population living in countries where fundamental freedoms of association, assembly and expression are restricted.[45]

Governments and elites are increasingly using restrictive NGO laws, strategic lawsuits against public participation, surveillance, digital controls, narrative strategies and repression to delegitimize civil society, shut down dissent and weaken the ability of citizens to hold power to account.[46] These restrictions disproportionately target those advocating for more inclusive and redistributive policies, and those most affected by injustice, such as environmental and land defenders, women's rights activists, Indigenous communities and other marginalized groups.[47]

Digital civic space is also under assault. Governments have increasingly resorted to internet shutdowns and censorship, silencing dissent and curtailing fundamental rights online; 283 disruptions were reported across 39 countries in 2023.[48] Opaque algorithms on major platforms owned by billionaires amplify disinformation and dangerous speech, with women leaders and minority activists often targeted by online abuse, undermining their ability to participate in civic life.[49]

Rising inequality fuels political capture. Data from 136 countries suggest that, as economic resources become more unequally distributed, so too does political power.[50] In highly unequal contexts, the wealthiest have excessive political voice to influence policy and debate, while those facing poverty and discrimination encounter greater barriers to participation. Extreme wealth can allow outsized influence over rules and institutions through lobbying, campaign financing and media ownership. Wealth is also buying outsized influence online, with tech monopolies concentrating wealth and power in the digital sphere.[51]

States' failure to uphold their social contracts is eroding public trust in institutions and the promise of progress.[52] When governments underfund public services, neglect fair taxation or hand policymaking to corporate interests, citizens' faith in democracy collapses.[53] Across Africa, rising wealth concentrations combined with weak commitments to redistributive policies are leaving people convinced that the state primarily serves elites.[54] Trust in political institutions in Africa has declined, with dissatisfaction linked to citizens' perceptions of inequality in terms of living conditions, governance and corruption.[55]

Those most negatively affected by inequality are often the least represented in decisions that shape their lives. People with fewer resources face structural barriers, such as a lack of identification, gender discrimination or racial bias. In low-income countries, 45% of the poorest quintile lack ID, which is often a requirement for voting.[56] Around 45% of all women in low-income countries lack ID, compared to 30% of men.[57] Gaps in representation are also stark. In Brazil in 2020, for example, only 16% of councillors were women. Black women – who make up over a quarter of the population – held just 2.5% of seats in the Chamber of Deputies.[58]

4.2 WHAT CHANGES ARE WE DEMANDING?

Tackling extreme inequality requires deliberate and concerted action to curb elite capture, to protect and defend fundamental human rights, ensure access to information, and expand participation so that people can shape the rules that govern their lives. The changes we need include:

- **Governments must tackle the structural ties between wealth and politics.** This means prioritizing lobbying registries, conflict-of-interest and cooling-off rules, and independent oversight bodies that uphold accountability. It also means regulating lobbying and campaign finance, enforcing competition policy to dismantle monopolies, and ending crony links between political and corporate elites.
- **Governments must guarantee the three non-negotiables of civic space** – freedom of association, assembly and expression. They must also protect human rights defenders, activists, journalists, trade unionists and whistleblowers from intimidation, harassment and reprisals.
- **Governments must actively counter discrimination and exclusion that limit equal participation in public life**, particularly for women and other marginalized groups. This includes ensuring safe, inclusive and rights-based digital civic space, and establishing mechanisms to monitor and report on the state of civic space and participation.
- **Governments must enact and enforce freedom-of-information laws and publish open budget data**, as well as institutionalizing participatory mechanisms that allow citizens to follow money and hold decision-makers to account. Without such transparency and access to information, citizens cannot influence or improve their lives, and the voices of marginalized groups go unheard.
- **Governments must invest in participatory mechanisms for policymaking** by giving rights holders – especially marginalized groups and those facing poverty and discrimination – a seat at the tables where decisions are made. We know that progressive reforms are possible with enough political will (see **Box 3**).
- **Civil society organizations must also take action to grow people power.** This means building broad alliances and working together on campaigns that address the roots of inequality. It also means brokering entry into decision-making for excluded groups, protecting civic space where rights defenders face threats or restrictions, and investing for the long term in women's, youth and grassroots movements, particularly where civic space is most constrained.

Together, these measures can shift power, protect democratic participation and ensure governments serve the interests of people rather than the privileged few. To truly tackle inequality, these efforts must go hand-in-hand with the strategies to push for progressive policy change on the other strategic issue areas in **Chapters 5–8**. A shift in power is fundamental to building a more just, equal and sustainable world that is grounded in the voices of the many.

BOX 3: PARTICIPATION IN ACTION[59]

In Latin America, deliberative and participatory mechanisms have been put in place to include millions of citizens and civil society organizations in policymaking. For example, in Brazil, National Public Policy Conferences held between 2003 and 2010 involved over 7 million people in framing national legislation, especially focusing on minority rights and redistributive policies.

In Australia, progress towards treaties and the signing of the first treaty with First Nations people in Victoria is making progress and providing hope for far greater self-determination, rights, and reducing economic and social inequality.

In India, political reservations (quotas) for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other marginalized groups have created opportunities for poor and socially excluded communities to gain legislative representation and push for redistributive policies.

Source: A. Maitland, A. Taneja, A. Kamande, C. Brown Solá, H. Bignell, M. Lawson and R. Møller Stahl. (2026). *Resisting the Rule of the Rich: Protecting freedom from billionaire power*. Oxfam. https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/research-publications/resisting-the-rule-of-the-rich/

CHAPTER 5

THE POWER OF PUBLIC SERVICES

5 THE POWER OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Quality universal public services are fundamental to any successful reduction in economic inequality. All National Inequality Reduction Plans have to have them as a core focus. They completely transform peoples' lives, and particularly those of women and marginalized groups. They are core to reducing the amount of poorly paid and underpaid care work. In short , they are one of the most potent tools governments have to fight inequality, and key to creating a human economy (see **Chapter 3**).[60] Not only can **public services reduce income gaps, they also improve social mobility and expand life opportunities**. They therefore help address the disadvantages that reinforce inequality across generations.

Oxfam's Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index (CRI) shows that universal public services reduce inequality by more than half in many countries.[61] Everyone benefits, but the poorest gain the most because in-kind transfers can represent their largest share of income.[62]

For example, universal health coverage in Thailand has protected millions from poverty by dramatically reducing out-of-pocket spending from 34% in 2000 to less than 10% in 2023; and has in turn reduced overall economic inequality in the country. [63] Ethiopia's education expansion saw 15 million additional children gain access to schooling between 2005 and 2015;[64] Uruguay's National Care System advanced gender equality;[65] and South Africa's universal pension and Brazil's Bolsa Família have been proven to cut poverty and inequality dramatically.[66]

However, in reality the impact of public services is far weaker than it could be in many lower-income countries, due to low investment and patchy coverage.[67] Decades of austerity, debt and neoliberal policies like privatisation have hollowed out investment in public services and handed essential functions to private interests that are driven by profit motives. Rebuilding public services and public investment is both an economic and democratic imperative. Markets cannot deliver equality. Only an active, caring and capable state, anchored in citizens' rights and participation, can ensure that public resources serve people and planet rather than profit.

This chapter explores how the inequality-reducing power of public services, social protection and care is being undermined, and how to counteract this trend. This requires us to ask who is gaining from today's status quo, and to build influencing strategies that address this. In practical terms this might mean:

- campaigning to challenge privatization and expose those seeking to profit from undermining public services; and
- advocating for more public investment and policies that ensure the rights of poor people are met, and especially women, racialized and marginalized groups.

5.1 WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WE NEED TO CONFRONT?

Despite their proven inequality-busting power, public services and social protection remain systematically underfunded and are increasingly under attack. The CRI found that 138 of 164 countries cut the budgetary shares for education, health or social protection spending in 2022–24.[68] These cuts were deliberate policy choices that weaken the redistributive power of the state. Debt and austerity are compounding the problem, driving major cuts, while extreme wealth for the richest people continues growing.

When services are absent, underfunded or captured by the interests of the wealthiest, they can worsen inequality. For example, children living in poverty across the Global South are seven times less likely to finish secondary school than their wealthier peers.[69] This demonstrates how education systems often reproduce privilege rather than dismantle it. A similar situation affects infrastructure: millions lack affordable energy, housing, transport and digital access. When designed around profit, rural communities, women and people with disabilities are excluded from opportunity.[70]

Underinvestment in health, childcare, water and eldercare is leaving women to pick up the slack, limiting their opportunities and deepening inequality.[71] Underpaid and unpaid care is a huge issue. Globally, women perform more than three quarters of unpaid care work, with the poorest women carrying the heaviest burden, either in their own homes, or as poorly paid care workers for others, or both.

Public resources and aid are being channelled to private providers. Across low- and middle-income countries, Oxfam has found evidence that many for-profit hospitals – backed by the World Bank and other donors – exploit patients and drive families into poverty or financial hardship.[72] In education, more than a fifth of World Bank projects between 2013 and 2018 supported private expansion rather than strengthening public systems.[73] This deepens inequality rather than reduces it, particularly in under- or weakly regulated contexts. It makes health and education something that is not a right, but something that is only available to those who have money.

Extreme concentrations of income and wealth shape how services are financed, delivered and accessed, often skewing them in favour of the better-off at the expense of quality services for everyone.[74] For example, privatization and commercialization allow the better-off to buy services, while the poorest are left behind**.** Every second, 60 people are pushed into poverty or hardship by catastrophic out-of-pocket healthcare costs- costs that simply do not exist if health services were free, universal and publicly delivered.[75]

5.2 WHAT CHANGES ARE WE DEMANDING?

Governments must reclaim public services as the backbone of equality.

To take advantage of their equalizing effect, governments must guarantee the provision of health, education, social protection and care as universal rights, delivered free at the point of use. To achieve this, the changes we need states to make are to:[76]

- **Guarantee universal high-quality public services.** Ensure free or affordable, available and accessible essential services and public goods like quality healthcare, education, care services, state security and safety, food security and social protection for all. Governments should explore public monopolies or public options in sectors that are prone to corporate concentration, could create strong externalities or are key to increasing equality and driving a just transition.
- **Finance services adequately and equitably using public money.** Governments must implement national plans to adequately fund public services, including a commitment to spending at least 15% of public expenditure on health and 20% on education. They must ensure that spending maximizes progress towards universal coverage and reaches the poorest first. This involves expanding fiscal space through progressive taxation of wealth, income and corporate profits, and curbing illicit financial flows. It also requires prioritizing debt cancellation and restructuring so that public services are not crowded out by repayments.
- **Develop plans to address inequality in public service provision.** Public services should be designed to reduce inequality. This starts with ensuring the availability of disaggregated data, but includes a formal commitment to monitor service provision, access and outcomes to identify and address persistent inequalities.
- **Invest in the public services workforce.** People- teachers, nurses, cleaners, clinicians- are the backbone of public services. They are also much more likely to be women too- public services are very often the only part of the economy where women are in the majority. Adequate numbers of trained, qualified, motivated and supported workers must be hired and/or trained to deliver quality services. They should be guaranteed decent pay, secure contracts, representation and social protection.
- **Invest in inclusive public infrastructure.** Transport, energy, housing, water and digital connectivity should be used to expand access to livelihoods, care and opportunity. Infrastructure must be publicly owned or effectively regulated, affordable, accessible and aligned with gender equality, disability inclusion and climate-justice objectives.
- **Recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work.** Governments should adopt gender policies and invest in childcare, eldercare and healthcare. Everyone must challenge racist, colonial, sexist and extractive and exploitative norms that push care responsibilities onto women, girls, non-binary people, migrants and racialized communities. Instead, ensure that care is recognized as a human right, public good and a collective responsibility.
- **End harmful privatization.** Decades of financialization that have treated public goods as revenue streams need to be reversed. This includes ending public–private partnerships that prioritize investor returns over equity, and redirecting finance towards building strong public systems. Any private actors active in these sectors should be governed in the public interest and, to the extent possible, owned by the public.

- **Align international finance with equity goals.** The World Bank, IMF and other international actors must end their promotion of austerity and privatization, and align all programmes, policy advice and financing with the objective of reducing inequality and strengthening public systems.

5.3 DATA SOURCES

- Many Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) contain amazing data on access to (or outcomes of) education, healthcare etc., disaggregated by income, gender, geography etc. These are incredibly useful documents. They can be used for example to show how poor girls in rural areas are x times less likely to go to high school than boys in rich families in the city.
- The Commitment to Equity studies provide detailed analysis on the impact of education, health and social protection spending on inequality for many countries.[77]These studies are very powerful because they show the direct impact of taxation, social protection and education and health on the Gini coefficient- they can show for instance how free education massively reduces economic inequality. In some countries the World Bank has also produced similar studies, together with the CEQ- you can ask and find these.
- The World Bank's World Development Indicator (WDI) has a massive set of global datasets covering various indicators.[78]
- The IMF collects government expenditure datasets and a five-year future projection in its World Economic Outlook Databases.[79] The Fund also publishes Gender Inequality Index data for many countries.[80]
- Education datasets across multiple indicators can be accessed from UNESCO's Institute for Statistics.[81] UNESCO's World Inequality Database on Education is also a useful source.[82]
- The World Health Organization provides a Health Inequality Data Repository.[83]
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a good source of statistics on social protection.
- The OECD provides data on various indicators for its member states.[84]

CHAPTER 6
PROGRESSIVE FINANCING

6. PROGRESSIVE FINANCING

Trillions of dollars are urgently needed to tackle today's poverty, inequality and climate crises.[85] **With the right political will, governments could raise the huge sums needed *and* tackle extreme inequality through progressive revenue-raising measures.** Their failure to do so leaves the poorest countries, the poorest people and the working class bearing the brunt of crisis after crisis while the super-rich accrue ever more wealth.

TAXATION- THE MOST VITAL SOURCE OF PROGRESSIVE FINANCING

Progressive taxation is absolutely critical to delivering successful National Inequality Reduction Plans. Progressive taxation can reduce economic inequality in two main ways:

1. It reduces economic inequality directly when the richest pay more tax than those with less, thus narrowing the gap between the two groups;
2. It then can reduce economic inequality even further if the revenue raised is spent more on helping those with less- for example if it is spent on social protection, education or health.

Conversely, the way taxes are raised can instead increase inequality- when the poorest pay a higher share of tax than the rich. This is very true with VAT, for example, which is a common way for governments to raise tax revenues.

In recent decades, the amount of tax paid by the richest in the world and in many countries has steadily reduced, as has the amount of tax paid by corporations. This directly undermines efforts to reduce inequality.

Changing this and ensuring the richest pay their fair share for a more equal world requires influencing strategies that challenge the power of the super-rich and the complicity of governments. In practical terms this might mean:

- campaigning to tax rich people and corporations more
- fighting to end tax dodging by rich people and corporations
- developing advocacy strategies to oppose regressive tax policies like VAT

6.1 WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WE NEED TO CONFRONT?

Neoliberal economics has allowed super-rich individuals and corporations to get away with making tiny tax contributions, while moving the tax burden onto the shoulders of those who can least afford it. Tax rates on the wealthiest people have been falling since the 1980s, including top rates of personal income tax and inheritance tax, as well as taxes on dividends and corporate income.[86] To take just one example, in Latin America the average marginal tax rate on the highest incomes fell from 51% in the early 1980s to less than 27% by 2015.[87]

BOX 4: A VICIOUS CYCLE OF REGRESSIVE TAX AND POLITICAL CAPTURE

Super-rich people's preferential access and influence over policy-making power allows them to block progressive tax reform that would redistribute power and money. For example, in Latin America, despite significant revenue needs in the aftermath of IMF and World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes in the 1980s and early 1990s, some government officials who benefited from close relationships with large companies blocked progressive tax reforms.

The super-rich also have the ability to buy control of the narrative and spread disinformation. The Tax Justice Network found that, amid growing public pressure for wealth taxes on the super-rich in 2024, there were 30 news pieces a day on a 'non-existent exodus' of millionaires from the UK.[88] Three quarters of newspaper circulation in the UK is controlled by four super-rich families.[89]

Source: A. Maitland, A. Taneja, A. Kamande, C. Brown Solá, H. Bignell, M. Lawson and R. Møller Stahl. (2026). Resisting the rule of the super-rich: Protecting freedom from billionaire power. Oxfam. https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/resisting-the-rule-of-the-rich-621776/

Meanwhile, governments have ramped up taxes on poorer people, including regressive consumption taxes like VAT that hit people living in poverty because they spend most of their income on basic survival items like food. As the main caregivers, women are hard hit when taxes on basic goods and services go up.

Today, personal income and consumption taxes like VAT account for more than 80% of total tax revenues; taxes on corporations contribute around 14%, and those on wealth just 4%.[90] Half of the world's billionaires live in countries with no inheritance tax, helping to keep great wealth in their families.[91]

The broken tax system has helped impoverish poorer governments. For example, the US$47bn of tax losses in lower-income countries due to global tax abuse are equivalent to 49% of their public health budgets.[92]

Many countries in the Global South are grappling with profound debt crises, leaving them unable to invest in tackling inequality, poverty and hunger. Between 1970 and 2023, Global South governments paid US$3.3tn in interest to Northern creditors.[93] UNCTAD reports that 3.4 billion people live in countries that spend more on debt interest payments than education or health.[94] The majority of debt is owed to private creditors, who are mainly rich people.[95] There is now an urgent need for comprehensive debt relief to create fiscal space for public investment.

Most debt of low-income countries has been owed to foreign creditors (mainly based in the Global North), but a substantial and rising share is now owed to domestic creditors. Governments pay very high interest rates and sometimes coerce domestic banks, insurance companies and pension funds to buy their bonds, sucking domestic savings away from investments by the private sector.

Even when a government defaults on its external debt, there is reluctance to default on domestic debt for fear of crashing the whole domestic financial sector and triggering a long-lasting depression. That, plus the high interest bills, creates a "too big to fail" vicious cycle of rising domestic debt.

Meanwhile, rich people as well as holders of pension funds (a minority of the population in low-income countries) profit from high interest rates at the expense of taxpayers and users of public services. The debt crisis thus has an impact on both North-South inequality and on inequality within Southern countries.

In response to overwhelming debt payments, **struggling governments' public finances have been further impacted by austerity measures** required for decades by powerful global financial institutions. Oxfam's research into a group of poor countries found that, for every $1 the IMF encouraged them to spend on public goods between 2020 and 2021, it told them to cut four times more through austerity measures.[96]

Meanwhile, **rich countries are failing to meet their development and climate finance responsibilities**, citing a lack of money, while changing the rules to allow them to put their own interests ahead of those of recipient countries. Despite committing to give 0.7% of GNI in aid, donors have under-delivered to the tune of at least US$7.2tn between 1970 and 2023. The steady rise in aid over the past couple of decades has reverted in the past couple of years with serious cuts by the biggest donors, putting the level of global Official Development Assistance (ODA) back to what it was in 2014.[97] Donors have been increasingly spending aid on their own domestic and geopolitical interests (e.g., competitiveness, security, migration) rather than tackling poverty and inequality.[98] A multilateral process has defined useful aid effectiveness principles over the past two decades. However, progress against them has been slow and uneven, and is now backsliding, due to the weakness of donors-controlled accountability mechanisms.

Climate finance promises are woefully inadequate – and have been routinely broken. However, these international transfers are a matter of justice, not charity: rich countries gained their position through the exploitation of the Global South, and through excessive resource extraction and greenhouse gas emissions. They are most responsible for climate impacts, while the poorest countries are left to bear their brunt.[99]

6.2 WHAT CHANGES ARE WE DEMANDING?

Tackling extreme inequality requires deliberate government action to redistribute economic resources and dramatically increase investments that address the world's most pressing social and environmental issues. This means reclaiming progressive taxation as one of the foundations of a more equal and sustainable future. It also necessitates a global agreement to increase taxes on the richest 1% – not just billionaires – at rates high enough to reduce inequality, as well as coordinated action to curb illicit financial flows that allow the super-rich to evade tax responsibility. The changes we need include:

PROGRESSIVE TAXATION

- **Introducing/strengthening progressive taxes, including taxes on wealth such as capital gains, inheritance and property among others to rates high enough to drastically reduce inequality.** For example, capital gains tax rates should match corporate income or top marginal personal income taxes. These taxes should be permanent and progressive, for instance property of certain value can be excluded to protect those whose assets are of low value.
- **Permanent Income and Capital Taxes:** Permanently increase taxes on the richest 1% so they pay at least 60% of their income from labor and capital, with significantly higher rates for multi-millionaires and billionaires. Capital gains (income from stocks, shares, and rent) should be taxed at rates at least as high as income from work.
- **Progressive Wealth Taxes:** Implement annual net wealth taxes and robust inheritance, property, and land taxes. Oxfam specifically advocates for a global wealth tax up to 5% on the world's multi-millionaires and billionaires to reduce the power concentration of the super-rich.
- **One-off Crisis Levies:** Introduce temporary measures such as solidarity wealth taxes and corporate windfall taxes to end crisis profiteering (such as the surging profits in the food and energy sectors).
- **Aimed Reductions:** Set a global target to dramatically reduce both the wealth and total number of billionaires between now and 2030.
- **Taxing corporations in every country at rates of at least 25%**, as recommended by the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation[100], and applying additional taxes on excess profits.
- **Exempting/zero rating basic goods** such as food from sales taxes to ensure that they are affordable to people with low incomes.
- **Scrapping tax incentives on big corporations.** Studies show that, on their own, tax exemptions have negligible or limited impact on attracting investment, growth and job creation – and come at a cost to government revenue.[101,102] Investment environments matter more than these incentives.
- **Empowering tax authorities, especially in developing countries,** so that they can effectively close loopholes. This could include the creation of dedicated roles dealing with high-net-worth individuals.
- **International tax solidarity and cooperation** to ensure that multinational corporations and the richest individuals pay their fair share of taxes in the jurisdictions where they generate revenue.

AID AND DEBT

- **International commitment and action to cancel unsustainable debts in the Global South.** This will require rethinking our approach to the international debt architecture. A UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt should rebalance power between debtor and creditors in debt restructurings, give legal force to multilateral debt restructuring agreements to ensure that private creditors also concede debt relief, and ensure that debt does not build up again to unsustainable levels.
- **The Common Framework (the current debt relief initiative launched by the G20) must be fixed to generate deeper[103] and faster[104] debt relief**.
- **Raise aid to 0.7% of donors' GNI.**
- **Reform aid governance and give recipient countries a seat at the table**. The definition of and accountability for the respect of aid effectiveness principles should be moved to a fair and globally inclusive forum where all countries have an equal voice.
- **End austerity measures and instead put in place progressive revenue-raising measures** to strengthen social contracts, which will have positive effects on gender equality and the rebalancing of care work.

6.3 DATA SOURCES

- The most comprehensive data on national tax indicators are available from national statistics agencies or ministries of finance, or can be found in national budgets.
- The IMF's World Revenue Longitudinal Database tracks government revenue trends in 193 countries. It includes different types of tax and non-tax revenues.[105]
- UNU WIDER's Government Revenue Dataset contains comprehensive tax and non-tax revenue datasets for virtually all countries.[106]
- The Commitment to Equity Institute has detailed analyses on the impact of taxes on inequality for many developing countries.[107] The OECD performs incidence analysis for its member states.[108]
- The Tax Expenditures Lab's Global Tax Expenditures Database provides information on preferential tax treatments such as exemptions, deductions, credits and deferrals implemented by national governments to promote different policy goals.[109] It shows revenue forgone because of these tax treatments.
- The OECD's Global Revenue Statistics Database provides information on tax revenues for 141 countries.[110]
- The best database for debt is the World Bank's International Debt Statistics.
- The best database for aid is the OECD's Creditor Reporting System – grant equivalent.

CHAPTER 7
WORKERS' RIGHTS AND FAIRER WAGES

7. WORKERS' RIGHTS AND FAIRER WAGES

The rules of the global economy reward wealth over work. However, most people rely on labour for their income. Recent analysis shows that 85% of humanity does not receive any income from wealth[111]. The share of national income going to workers has fallen, while their labour rights and working conditions have deteriorated. Meanwhile, economic returns to wealth have soared, increasing the wealth of super-rich elites to unprecedented levels.

Labour also intersects with other forms of discrimination. Women, migrants, informal workers, Indigenous people and racialised communities are disproportionately concentrated in precarious, underpaid and undervalued work, while also carrying the overwhelming responsibilities of unpaid and underpaid care work. Challenging inequality in the world of work means transforming the structural power imbalances that sustain exclusion across economies and societies.

Strong collective bargaining systems compress wage distributions and reduce poverty among workers by raising wage floors, reducing gender and other pay gaps, and limiting excessive executive compensation growth. In countries where trade unions are strong, the wage share is higher and income inequality is lower. This makes the defence and expansion of workers' collective power not just a labour issue, but a core inequality issue. [112]

This chapter explores inequality in the world of work and how it relates to extreme inequality more broadly.

Achieving change on this strategic area requires influencing strategies that address labour policies and build the power of trade unions and civil society. It also requires challenging super-rich shareholders and elites who can influence policy in their favour. In practical terms this might mean:

- campaigning against excessive executive pay or windfall profits;
- advocating for living wages and the protection of collective bargaining and freedom of association; or
- directly supporting organizing efforts of unions.

7.1 WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WE NEED TO CONFRONT?

While the income and wealth of super-rich people booms, billions of others struggle to make ends meet due to stagnating wages and the soaring cost of living. In 2023, Oxfam estimated that 1.7 billion workers – nearly half the global labour force – lived in countries where inflation outpaced wages, effectively cutting real incomes.[113] Where wages fail to keep pace with living costs, or where social protection is weak, even those in work can be pushed into poverty.

The absence of collective bargaining, freedom of association and minimum wage protection allows wages to stagnate and pushes workers into temporary, informal and subcontracted work. The CRI Index 2024 showed that **governments are backpedalling on labour rights and minimum wages**, while the number of people in vulnerable employment continues to rise.[114] Nearly half of all workers worldwide are in informal employment without contracts or protections, with rates close to 90% in low-income countries. The rise of gig and platform work has added new forms of vulnerability.[115]

Women are disproportionately represented in low-paid, part-time, informal and insecure work, and face persistent discrimination, harassment and gender pay gaps. Gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work – including sexual harassment, exploitation and violence against women workers, LGBTQIA+ workers, domestic workers and migrant workers remain widespread barriers to economic justice and decent work. Women and girls also perform over three quarters of all unpaid care work globally, spending 160 million more hours every day on these tasks than men and boys.[116]

At the other end of the spectrum, **executive pay, corporate profits and returns to rich shareholders have soared**. Average CEO pay rose 50% in real terms between 2019 and 2024, while average worker pay grew by less than 1%.[117] Corporate profits have surged, much of it paid out in dividends and buybacks rather than shared with workers.[118]

Unions are one of the strongest equalizing forces in the labour market. They push up wages and narrow gender and racial pay gaps.[119] However, **union power is being systematically eroded**.[120] According to the

International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), 87% of countries now violate the right to strike and 80% violate the right to collective bargaining.[121]

The super-rich are also directly undermining the wages, labour rights and fundamental freedoms for workers. In Argentina, for example, President Javier Milei, backed by Argentine billionaire Eduardo Eurnekian, has sought to amend hundreds of laws to deregulate working conditions and wages, dismantle union protections and privatize public companies.[122] Protesters face an increasingly hostile context as Milei's government has also passed laws restricting the right to protest.[123]

Tech owners and investors are capturing the increased profits from automation, digitalization and AI, which are displacing millions of jobs. Platform work increasingly sees workers reclassified as 'independent contractors', stripping them of rights and protections. Unless managed fairly, technology risks opening new frontiers of inequality.[124]

7.2 WHAT CHANGES ARE WE DEMANDING?

When pay and worker protections are eroded, inequality widens. Ensuring decent work and fair wages for all is one of the most powerful tools to build a more equal economy that leaves no one behind. Governments can and must rewrite the rules of the economy to reward work, not wealth, and ensure that rights on paper are enforced in reality.[125] The changes we need include:

- **Governments ratifying and implementing core ILO conventions** on labour rights.[126]
- **Strengthening collective bargaining, labour rights and unions.** Governments must protect and expand the right to organize, bargain and strike. Union-busting laws should be repealed; rights extended to informal, gig and migrant workers; and labour inspectorates properly resourced to enforce protections.
- **Guaranteeing decent work and living wages.** Minimum wages must move towards living wages, regularly adjusted for the cost of living. Discriminatory rates must be eliminated. Secure contracts, paid leave and safe workplaces are essential to ensure jobs are truly decent.
- **Anchoring wage-setting in a tripartite social dialogue** between state, employers and unions.
- **Extending labour rights to informal, gig and vulnerable workers.** Exclusions that limit protections only to formal employment must be removed; legal frameworks must be adapted; and enforcement and social protection systems extended to cover all workers in practice. Universal shock-responsive tax-funded national social protection systems that protect all workers are necessary.
- **Embedding equal pay, anti-discrimination and gender-transformative protections.** Laws on equal pay for work of equal value, pay transparency, parental leave and universal social protection must be enacted and enforced. So too must protections against discrimination and harassment that address multiple and intersecting forms of exclusion - including gender, race, ethnicity, caste, disability and migration status - and extend beyond the formal economy, so that informal and precarious workers are not left out. Care must be treated as a public good: universal childcare, eldercare and healthcare would redistribute unpaid care, create millions of decent jobs and ensure paid care workers receive fair pay and full rights.
- **Managing technological change fairly.** In dialogue and agreement with workers' organizations, governments must regulate online platforms and AI so that new technologies create decent work rather than undermine rights. Productivity gains should be shared through wage growth, retraining and protections for workers in transition.

7.3 DATA SOURCES

- Data on employment, wages and labour rights etc. can be sourced from most national statistics agencies.
- The ILO provides comprehensive labour datasets across various indicators.[127]
- The World Inequality Database has data on capital and labour income shares of national income, and female labour income share.[128]
- The ITUC's Global Rights Index is published each year and is an excellent, comprehensive index of workers' rights violations.[129]
- WageIndicator's Labour Rights Index assesses labour legislation in 145 countries, which account for more than 90% of the global workforce.[130]

CHAPTER 8 CLIMATE

8 CLIMATE

The world faces two interlocking crises, one of inequality and one of climate breakdown. Our world is being driven towards climate catastrophe. Without urgent and systemic change, we are on course for temperature increases incompatible with a future for human life on Earth. The world's poorest people will suffer most as the impacts of climate change continue to unfold.

It has long been understood that the wealthiest countries have emitted dangerous and disproportionate levels of greenhouse gases, but it is now clear that **the emissions of the world's wealthiest people – from rich and poor countries alike – are overwhelmingly to blame for the climate crisis.** We cannot tackle it without action to curb super-rich people's carbon use and excessive levels of wealth.

At the same time **inequality defines who is most impacted by climate breakdown.** The richest countries and the richest people are the ones least impacted by the floods, fires, and famines that climate breakdown is causing. More equal countries are far more able to face climate shocks in ways that minimise suffering, death and economic losses for everyone. One study of multiple countries found that people are seven times more likely to die from flooding in inequality countries.

Achieving change on this urgent strategic issue requires influencing strategies that address both the climate and inequality crises. In practical terms this might mean:

- campaigning for reductions in economic inequality- more equal countries deliver much greater social progress with a much lower level of carbon emissions, and they are also far more resilient to the impacts of climate breakdown.
- campaigning for policies that tackle climate and inequality together- e.g. social protection schemes to protect the poorest from disaster, or public transport and public energy.
- building campaigns to tax the super-rich and make rich polluters pay
- supporting civil society and social movements to rise up and demand change.

8.1 WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WE NEED TO CONFRONT?

Carbon consumption is reaching levels incompatible with life on earth. As part of the Paris Agreement in 2015, the world agreed to limit global warming to no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Temperatures beyond this would be unsafe for the life on Earth. They would disproportionately affect disadvantaged populations through food insecurity, higher food prices, loss of incomes and livelihoods, adverse health effects and population displacement.[131] If we are to have even a 50% chance of keeping global warming below the 1.5°C threshold, global emissions cannot exceed 250 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. However, the world is currently on track to do just that by 2029.[132]

The world's richest people are overwhelmingly responsible for burning through the carbon budget. Since the 1990s, the world's richest 1% have consumed twice as much carbon as the poorest half of humanity.[133]

> If everyone emitted as much carbon as those in the top 1%, the world's remaining carbon budget would be gone in under five months.[134]

It is now evident that **we cannot avoid climate catastrophe without a dramatic decrease in the emissions of the world's super-rich.** Keeping the world below a 1.5°C rise requires the emissions of the top 1% to drop by 97% by 2030, yet recent trends predict just a 5% decrease.[135]

Another way to look at this is: **as long as extreme wealth exists, it will be impossible to achieve the cuts needed to save people and planet**. The excessive emissions of super-rich people's consumption and investment (see **Box 5**) are only possible because of the excessive wealth and power they hold.

BOX 5: THE CONSUMPTION AND INVESTMENT EMISSIONS OF THE SUPER-RICH

Extreme wealth is allowing an unprecedented level of luxury consumption by the richest few. A billionaire's **superyachts and private jets** emit more carbon in under a fortnight than the average person will in their lifetime. Two of Elon Musk's private jets produce the equivalent of more than 5,000 years of carbon emissions by the average member of the world's poorest 50%.

Four decades (1990–2030) of consumption emissions by the world's richest people are estimated to cause US$44tn in economic damage to low- and lower-middle-income countries between 1990 and 2050. Just four years of the consumption emissions of the world's richest 1% are expected to cause 1.5 million excess deaths due to extreme heat between 2020 and 2120. Of these, 78% will be in low- and lower-middle income countries.

The world's richest people also invest heavily in fossil fuels and other highly polluting industries. Oxfam found that almost 40% of billionaire investments are in highly polluting industries like oil, mining, shipping and cement, and more than three quarters of the companies they invest in have not set net-zero targets. These 'investment emissions' represent super-rich people's largest and most damaging contribution to climate change.

Based on: M. Alestig, N. Dabi, A. Jeurkar, A. Maitland, M. Lawson, D. Horen Greenford, C. Lesk and A. Khalfan. (2024). *Carbon Inequality Kills: Why curbing the excessive emissions of an elite few can create a sustainable planet for all*. Oxfam. https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/carbon-inequality-kills-why-curbing-the-excessive-emissions-of-an-elite-few-can-621656/

The inequality of emissions is compounded by the inequality of climate change's impact. Those countries and people who have done least to contribute to greenhouse gas emissions are being hit hardest.

For example, while East Africa has contributed almost nothing to global carbon emissions, it is one of the regions worst hit by climate change, with the poorest people bearing the greatest cost. Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia have faced frequent and extreme draughts in recent years. In 2023, some 31.5 million people in South Sudan were left facing acute hunger due to flooding.[136]

The impacts will be nothing short of catastrophic for the approximately 500 million smallholder farmers worldwide – many of them women – who rely on agriculture as their main source of food and income.[137] A UN Food and Agriculture Organization study finds that a 1°C increase in long-term average temperatures reduces the average income of female-headed households by 34% more than that of male-headed households.[138]

Unequal countries are hit harder by the impacts of climate change. For example, the death toll from flooding is seven times higher in the most unequal countries compared to more equal countries.[139]

8.2 WHAT CHANGES ARE WE DEMANDING?

Governments must take action to drastically cut the emissions of the richest people and their corporations. These must be pursued in addition to all of the other measures necessary to reduce economic inequality, because the super-rich elite is driving our world to climate catastrophe. The tax measures listed in **Section 6.3** would help raise the money needed to invest in tackling the climate crisis, including a fair transition away from fossil fuels, as well as funding free public services. The climate-specific changes we need include:

- **Producing and implementing ambitious climate plans to reduce emissions to comply with the Paris Agreement**. This means meeting Nationally Determined Contributions based on the fair share principle and a 1.5°C limit on temperature increases. National plans should include measures to significantly reduce the emissions of the richest individuals, phase out fossil fuels and outline financial contributions from the richest members of society to fund climate adaptation and a just transition.
- **Taxing the super-rich at levels high enough to curb their excessive consumption and investment emissions**, and meaningfully reduce inequality. This means introducing a range of permanent progressive taxes on the incomes and wealth of the richest 1%, applying additional taxes on income and wealth from polluting investments, and implementing punitive taxes of at least 90% on luxury consumption.
- **High-income countries using a portion of the revenue they raise to meet their international climate finance responsibilities in full**, as well as meeting international aid commitments.
- **Invest in the green transition.** Public investment in universal services and green infrastructure – health, education, energy, transport, housing and digital access – is central to climate resilience and a just transition. Only an active and capable state can ensure these investments serve people rather than profit, creating decent jobs, reducing emissions and strengthening communities against future shocks. As such, climate strategies must address the loss and damage to public services as a result of climate change, develop and implement comprehensive adaptation plans to ensure public services' continuity amid climate-related disruption, and climate-proof and decarbonize public infrastructure and facilities**.**

CHAPTER 9
LAND, FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

9 LAND, FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

9.1 LAND

Land is at the core of inequality broadly. Land is the original form of wealth, and land inequality is the oldest form of inequality. Land inequality refers to the extreme concentration of access to and control over land, as well as the unequal distribution of the benefits generated from the use of that land and its natural resource wealth.

9.2 WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WE NEED TO CONFRONT?

Land inequality sits at the heart of other forms of inequality. It is fundamentally related to and often central to broader inequalities, such as wealth, political, social, gender, environmental, and spatial inequalities, particularly in agrarian societies. Today, the largest 1% of farms control more than 70% of the world's farmland. In Africa, half of land value is owned by the richest 1%, while the bottom 50% owns just 8%.[140]

Land inequality is also central to many global crises and trends, especially the climate crisis. Those most vulnerable to climate impacts are those whose land rights are not secured. Similarly, large extents of land in the Global South are taken over by rich countries to implement 'green solutions' to the climate crisis.

Historically, land inequality is tied to legacies of colonialism, conquest, and division. In many parts of the world, it is a politically charged issue. Colonialism was centred on dispossessing people of their land and extracting its natural-resource wealth for the benefit of the richest people in the richest countries.[141] The colonial period saw highly racialised and *de facto* segregated land tenure systems being introduced in many parts of the world, ignoring the traditional and customary land governance systems that had existed in the colonies for hundreds of years. After independence, those in power during colonial times held onto their wealth and political power, passing on the land inequality they generated to today's landed oligarchies. Over time, traditional elites established new alliances, and other elite groups emerged, reconsolidating structures of privilege and land-based inequality.

The neo-colonialism of today continues to extract natural resource wealth from the land and enriches elites and powerful multinational corporations and drives land inequality. This 'extractivist' economic model seeks to control land to cater for the increasing demand for land for the expansion of large-scale monoculture for timber extraction, livestock farming and agricultural production, fossil fuel extraction and mineral and metal mining. This extractive approach dispossesses smallholders and marginalised communities, disrupts and weakens local agri-food systems, and divorces land from its biophysical relationships and the daily needs of local people. It denies Indigenous Peoples of their ancestral lands, which are closely connected to their spiritual and religious traditions, culture and archaeological and historical sites.

Land inequality is a cause and a consequence of other inequalities - it is shaped by economic, political, social, spatial, and environmental factors, which in turn it also influences. This interconnectedness means that addressing land inequality requires an all-encompassing, cross-sectoral approach. It also means that tackling land inequality will have a wide range of positive implications for our planet's broader inequalities and crises.

9.3 WHAT CHANGES ARE WE DEMANDING?

Reversing land inequality to any significant extent will require a deep transformation in power relations and major changes in political, economic, and legal norms. They will require action that strikes at the root of what makes societies and economies unequal and unsustainable. We advocate for **land justice**, understood as justice that is integrated economically, culturally and politically in rural and agrarian systems. Our integrated approach to land justice seeks to address the historical, contemporary and foreseeable future injustices related to land.

- **Producing and implementing ambitious climate plans to reduce emissions to comply with the Paris Agreement**. This means meeting Nationally Determined Contributions based on the fair share principle and a 1.5°C limit on temperature increases. National plans should include measures to significantly reduce the emissions of the richest individuals, phase out fossil fuels and outline financial contributions from the richest members of society to fund climate adaptation and a just transition.
- **Redistribute land:** Governments must take concrete measures to redistribute land ownership, including eliminating the privileges of elites responding to rural populations' demands for access to and control over land and achieving greater equity. They must be accompanied by complementary policies that are consistent with a country's economic and social policy. They must include measures to prevent a return to land inequality over time.
- **Just and democratic land governance:** Land governance models must promote sustainable, equitable and inclusive land use that secures land rights and food security of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. For land governance to be effective, the right policies must be in place at the national level and implemented and enforced at all levels across the country. Structural drivers of land inequality must be addressed by democratising land governance, prioritising the leadership of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in decision-making processes.
- **Legally recognise and protect land rights:** Governments must legally recognise and protect land rights, with a particular focus on women's rights and customary and collective rights, particularly those of Indigenous peoples. They must ensure Indigenous territories and traditional and customary land rights are protected and upheld in all land-related policies and regulations, including by restitution developed in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples and affected communities, returning land or providing fair and equitable compensation and resources for sustainable development.
- Oxfam generally supports land formalisation initiatives as long as they are inclusive of those in vulnerable situations, take into account secondary rights, and are not oriented toward the commodification of land. We look at the interests being served by land formalisation initiatives, identify risks and how to mitigate them, and are critical of land-market-oriented titling initiatives that lead to further commodification of land, exacerbating land inequality.
- **Gender equality in land rights:** Ensure that women have equitable, secure and stable access, use and control of land, which allows them to meet their day-to-day economic, social and cultural needs and to thrive in their families, communities and societies. Address structural barriers, social and cultural norms and practices that discriminate against women and prevent women from having equal access to and control over land and land-based resources.
- **Address political capture:** Political capture must be avoided or addressed, as redistribution efforts and just land governance are likely to be impacted if control of land policies, markets, and other parts of the agri-food system remains in the hands of a few.
- **Protect the land rights of smallholders:** Governments should support more resilient, sustainable production models for small-scale producers and family farmers. This means allowing them greater autonomy from corporate production systems and the ability to earn reasonable returns by employing agroecological, or at least low-external-input, production practices linked to local markets. Public investment is needed not just for access to good-quality land, but also for improved public market spaces, protection of national agricultural produce markets from international commodity market pressures, research on improved, ecologically sound inputs such as seed and genetic stock, and appropriate storage and processing technologies.
- **Regulate corporate capture of land that drives inequality:** Government policies should regulate land use to address patterns of inequality driven by land use for large-scale, environmentally damaging projects including large-scale industrial agriculture, monoculture, mining activities and so-called 'green solutions' to the climate crisis. These must not come at the expense of the rights to land of women, local communities and Indigenous Peoples.

9.4 FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

The current unfair global food system, poor public investment in agriculture, land injustice, the impacts of climate change, the cost-of-living crisis, and conflicts mean that hundreds of millions of people do not have enough to eat. At the same time, traders and multinationals in the global food system are making enormous amounts of wealth. For instance, between 2020 and 2022, billionaires in the food and agricultural sector saw their wealth rise by 45% in just two years, with 62 new food billionaires minted over the same period.[142]

The agrifood system is a significant source of income for low-income families, especially in rural areas in many countries of the Global South. In 2022, two in every five workers globally were employed in the agrifood system, rising to 70% in Asia and Africa.[143] However, small-scale farmers and workers in the agricultural sector are some of the poorest people. Further, low-income earners spend the biggest share of their income on food, meaning that when the food system is unfair and food prices rise, they carry the greatest burden.

Women are especially impacted by the inequality in the agrifood system, including producing most of the food we eat, lack of land ownership, higher food prices, and exploitation in the food supply chain system.

9.5 WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WE NEED TO CONFRONT?

In many parts of the world, land inequality is extremely high and is a key contributor to inequality in the food system. For instance, in Latin America and South Asia, the top 10% own up to 75% of the agricultural land, while the bottom 50% have about 2%.[144] In Africa, the top 10% own 60% of the agricultural land, while the bottom 50% have about 3%. This means that people who need land the most are often concentrated on small plots of land and are landless, while those who least need it have huge swaths of land. It is also highly gendered, with women often lacking control of the land they work on.

Poor public investment in agriculture is a key barrier to food security. As of 2024, public spending on agriculture globally was less than 2% of total government spending.[145] This means a lack of irrigation systems, research and development, agricultural personnel, infrastructure such as storage, feeder roads, and electricity connectivity in rural areas. This affects not only production but also how food moves from farmers to consumers and how it is stored. In some cases, even when farmers produce enough food, it fails to reach consumers or is not consumed. Indeed, as much as 20% of the food produced globally goes to waste.[146]

Information asymmetry in the food market is another cause of inequality in the food system. This has everything to do with the lack of government regulation in the local food market. While intermediaries can provide market access for both farmers and consumers, they often create barriers to food access through exploitation and market distortion, especially because of information asymmetry.[147] These rich middlemen set farmgate prices and determine what consumers will pay. Consequently, they capture a significant share of what farmers produce while making food unaffordable to low-income earners.

The increasing financialization of the global food system, including speculation in commodity markets, and unfair trade rules designed to benefit rich people in rich countries. This makes food unaffordable to many, impoverishes farmers, and makes it difficult for low-income net food-importing countries to strengthen their food systems, while at the same time increasing the wealth of the richest and their corporations. In addition, big corporations are deciding what we eat, and thus what farmers are to produce.[148]

Our current food system is highly gendered. Women who do most of the work on the farm suffer disproportionately. They often lack ownership and control of the land they till, and benefit little from the food they produce due to exploitation in the food supply chain-both locally and at the global level. For instance, lack of land ownership means that it's difficult to secure credit that can help them improve their farm. In addition, they are disproportionately impacted when food prices go up, especially because they earn and own less than men, and they are the main caregivers.

9.6 WHAT CHANGES ARE WE DEMANDING?

A fairer food and agriculture system should put farmers and consumers at the centre, not the richest and the corporations. Governments and the international community must act to secure our food system, support farmers, ensure that everyone is fed, and tackle inequality in the food system.

1. **Enhanced public investment in agriculture**: A fairer agriculture and food system starts with quality public investment in areas like irrigation, research and development, agricultural personnel, farmer education and food storage systems. This means more and equitable public spending in the agricultural system.
2. **Progressive tax measures** by taxing the richest to raise the money for the agrifood investment.
3. **Tighter regulation of local food markets**: Tackling the intermediaries' problem in the local food supply chain in the Global South is paramount. Governments should set up systems to ensure that greedy intermediaries do not rip off farmers and consumers. This should also include the entire infrastructure in the food supply chain: storage, electricity, internet connections, good feeder roads in rural areas, and market access.
4. **Universal social protection system**: This will ensure that a failed harvest doesn't mean farmers falling into poverty or people sleeping hungry because they don't have money to buy food. A strong social protection system would also make farmers more resilient, as they can use it to improve their production, thus improving their incomes while ensuring that food is affordable.
5. **Rich countries fulfilling their climate financing pledge**: More financing should be poured into climate adaptation to protect our food system and help farmers adapt to climate change. This includes things like drought-resistant crops and livestock, soil conservation, irrigation, flood control, among others. This requires rich governments to fulfil their pledges on climate financing.
6. **Tackling land injustice:** This includes ensuring that community land on which many farmers depend, especially pastoralist communities, is not stolen or handed over to large-scale farms. In addition, governments must ensure that land rights of small-scale farmers are protected.
7. **Regulate the global food market and implement fairer trade rules, and tighter regulation of food commodity markets.** This includes transparency by improving data on food stock levels. The development of strategic food reserves should be supported, given the role that stocks can play in buffering the impacts of food crises. New rules should also be implemented to prevent excessive financial speculation from fuelling food price volatility. This will protect low-income countries and help them build stronger food systems.
8. **Rebalancing the power in food supply chains**: This includes ensuring that the rights of the farmers and workers producing our food are respected. More support should be directed to farmers and agricultural workers to expand sustainable domestic and local food production. This would reduce dependence on international markets, which exposes countries to supply disruptions and price fluctuations.
9. **Access to funding for small-scale farmers**: Support small-scale farmers in low-income countries to access funding, infrastructure, inputs and markets.
10. **Radical action must be taken to protect and uphold women's rights**: Public policies must be enacted that facilitate women's access to inputs, resources and services, and guarantee their land rights.

9.7 DATA SOURCES

1. FAOSTAT from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations is the world's largest database on food and agriculture datasets.
2. The Global Database of Land Distribution and Inequality (LINEQ) contains comprehensive data on land distribution by country, including Gini of land and distribution by decile.

CHAPTER 10
TURNING ANALYSIS INTO ACTION

10 TURNING ANALYSIS INTO ACTION

This chapter explains how to develop effective influencing strategies to tackle extreme inequality. It covers practical steps, including conducting a power analysis and inequality diagnostics, as well as strategies that can be combined for greater impact.

Oxfam defines influencing as *'systematic efforts to change power relationships; attitudes, social norms and behaviours; the formulation and implementation of official policies, laws and regulations; budgets; and company policies and practices in ways that promote more just and sustainable societies without poverty'*.[149]

Reducing inequality first and foremost requires **deliberate efforts to shift the terms of the debate,** so that more progressive and ambitious change is both possible and sustainable.

What does this mean? It is about actions we would take to shift public opinion in your country- to shift the national conversation, to educate and inform the public in ways that change people's understanding and perceptions; for example that they are poor because of the rich, not because of migrants or marginalized groups, or that rich people are very rarely rich because of hard work, but more often because of corruption or inheritance.

This requires very strong media and popular communications work at all times- not just proactively when we release reports etc, but constantly and reactively, jumping on the story of the day to show how the core to this is inequality- for example when children get their results each year from final exams, and many of the cleverest kids cannot go to school because of money.

By shifting this national perception, we in turn shift the power to put pressure on politicians to counter the huge influence of the richest and take steps to reduce inequality instead.

Shifting Influencing work can comprise a range of tactics and interventions including:

- Media work, proactive and reactive; amazing facts, stories
- Extensive use of social media
- building alliances;
- enhancing capacity;
- research and policy analysis;
- advocacy; and
- public campaigns and media.

10.1 SHAPING THE DEBATE AND SHIFTING POWER

Inequality is the outcome of political choices and narratives that serve the super-rich. A just, equal and sustainable world is not possible unless we challenge these powerful norms.

For decades, the dominant neoliberal economic model has treated the pursuit of growth and profit as unquestionable goods. This ideology has concentrated wealth in the hands of a small group of people while eroding public institutions. It has facilitated an unjust transfer of resources from the Global South to the Global North through unfair trade, debt burdens, global tax rules and extractive value chains. Achieving justice, therefore, also means decolonizing our economies.

The narratives that uphold this system –must be challenged and replaced by human economies (see the introduction to **Chapter 3**) promoting care, dignity and shared prosperity, rather than competition and accumulation. In practice, this means states guaranteeing universal public services and redistributing wealth through progressive taxation. People should live and thrive within planetary boundaries. Power should be accountable to people.

To tackle extreme inequality, we must **build consensus and action towards this human economy**. This means pushing the boundaries of what is considered thinkable – and make it real.

10.2 ANALYSING INEQUALITY AND POWER

A strong inequality influencing strategy rests on two foundations:

1. A clear picture of how inequality operates in your context.
2. A power analysis that identifies who holds influence, where opportunities lie, and how collective action can make change unstoppable.

POWER ANALYSIS

To act effectively, we must understand who holds power, who benefits from the current system and who can change the rules. Power analysis connects inequality data with political realities, revealing where influence sits, whose voices are marginalized and what alliances can shift outcomes.

In general, there are three faces of power:[150]

- **Visible.** This includes formal laws, policies and budgets.
- **Hidden.** This determines who sets agendas and whose voices are excluded.
- **Invisible.** This shapes norms and beliefs, making unequal systems appear natural or inevitable.

This power manifests as:[151]

- **Power over others**, i.e., domination or control;
- **Power with**, i.e., collective strength through collaboration;
- **Power to**, i.e., individual capacity to act; and
- **Power within**, i.e., self-awareness, confidence and agency.

Gender, class, race and disability shape people's access to voice and resources. Together, these dimensions are central to understanding how change happens and how collective power can challenge inequality – transforming power over into more equitable and inclusive forms of power with.

Asking key questions in power analyses helps us examine who holds decision-making authority, who sets agendas, and how excluded groups can influence change.[152] Thus, a power analysis not only maps actors but also **maps political opportunities**, for instance:

- which current opportunities are ripe for change;
- which political moments should be capitalized on; and
- who can help move any identified windows of opportunity.

A power analysis should be iterative and participatory, involving partners, movements and communities**,** as well as engaging with a wider range of actors shaping the national context. This requires ongoing dialogue and exchange – not only to share evidence, but to listen to different actors' own analyses of inequality, their priorities and recommendations, and what they expect from influencing efforts. Mapping power together builds a shared understanding of the system, strengthens collective ownership of strategies, and ensures that influencing plans are grounded in lived realities rather than assumptions.

CHAPTER 11
THE FIVE PILLARS OF INFLUENCING

11 THE FIVE PILLARS OF INFLUENCING

A robust inequality audit and power analysis should lead to a strategy. Together, they help identify:

- which inequalities are most urgent or symbolic;
- what types of power need to shift, e.g., institutional, cultural or financial; and
- where political openings lie, e.g., budget cycles, tax debates or civic mobilization moments.

A strategy should determine, based on the evidence, which levers of change to prioritize and which allies to engage. The goal is to connect what we know about inequality to how we act on it. An effective strategy should weave together the **three complementary routes** emphasized in the *Oxfam Inequality Toolkit* (2020):[153]

1. **Change the narrative**: make inequality visible and fairness desirable.
2. **Change the rules**: target policy and budget decisions.
3. **Mobilize citizens**: build alliances, creative action and organized participation.

These routes provide the direction of change. How to deliver these routes in practice are laid out in Oxfam's **five interlocking pillars of influencing**:[154]

1. Alliance building;
2. Capacity exchange;
3. Research and policy engagement;
4. Advocacy and opportunity; and
5. Media campaigns, media and public imagination.

These pillars are not linear steps; they are mutually reinforcing strategies that, when aligned, can transform policy and power.

Influence is not only about **what we influence but also how we influence**, so equity and inclusion should be centred as both **process and outcome**.[155] Positive, evidence-based narratives and real-world examples that demonstrate that change is possible can help to build public support and strengthen engagement with policymakers.

11.1 PILLAR 1: ALLIANCE BUILDING

Alliance building means creating new or supporting existing struggles that already challenge inequality – e.g., feminist, labour, migrant, youth, faith, disability and climate movements; community organizers; and reformers working within institutions – and bringing them together to fight inequality.

These coalitions are co-architects of change: they shape agendas, share legitimacy and sustain collective action over time.

By aligning internal and external actors – from grassroots networks to national reformers – alliances create **multi-level influence**, reaching individual citizens, local and national governments, and transnational movements.

BOX 6: THE FIGHT INEQUALITY ALLIANCE

The Fight Inequality Alliance (FIA) brings together social movements, trade unions, feminist networks, youth groups and community organizations in multiple countries and across the globe, all committed to challenging the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a few.

FIA's 'outsider' strategy complements Oxfam's five pillars of influence: while Oxfam often opens policy spaces, FIA pushes from the outside through protest, art and mass mobilization to make inequality a moral and political crisis.

Across the Global South, FIA members are:

- Building people-powered movements that hold governments and corporations to account;
- Delivering creative public actions – from cost-of-living marches to artistic protests – that make inequality visible;
- Promoting a narrative of hope grounded in fairness and dignity; and
- Engaging under-35s and artists to turn outrage into imagination.

Working through strong alliances and coalitions gives legitimacy to demands and strength to movements. Alliances can protect civic space where it is closing and amplify influence where it is open, enabling groups to shield one another and act in solidarity. Therefore, **alliance-building is particularly critical in contexts where civic space is shrinking**.

In El Salvador, for example, Oxfam has promoted the Care Co-Responsibility Network, a coalition made up of 11 women's and youth organizations that advocate for the social, economic, and political recognition of care work to address gender inequality. In a context marked by restrictions on civic space, the Network's collective work has helped publicly position the care agenda through campaigns and public actions. In addition, they have created spaces for dialogue with the State, putting forward proposals to advance the implementation and public financing of the national care policy in El Salvador.[156]

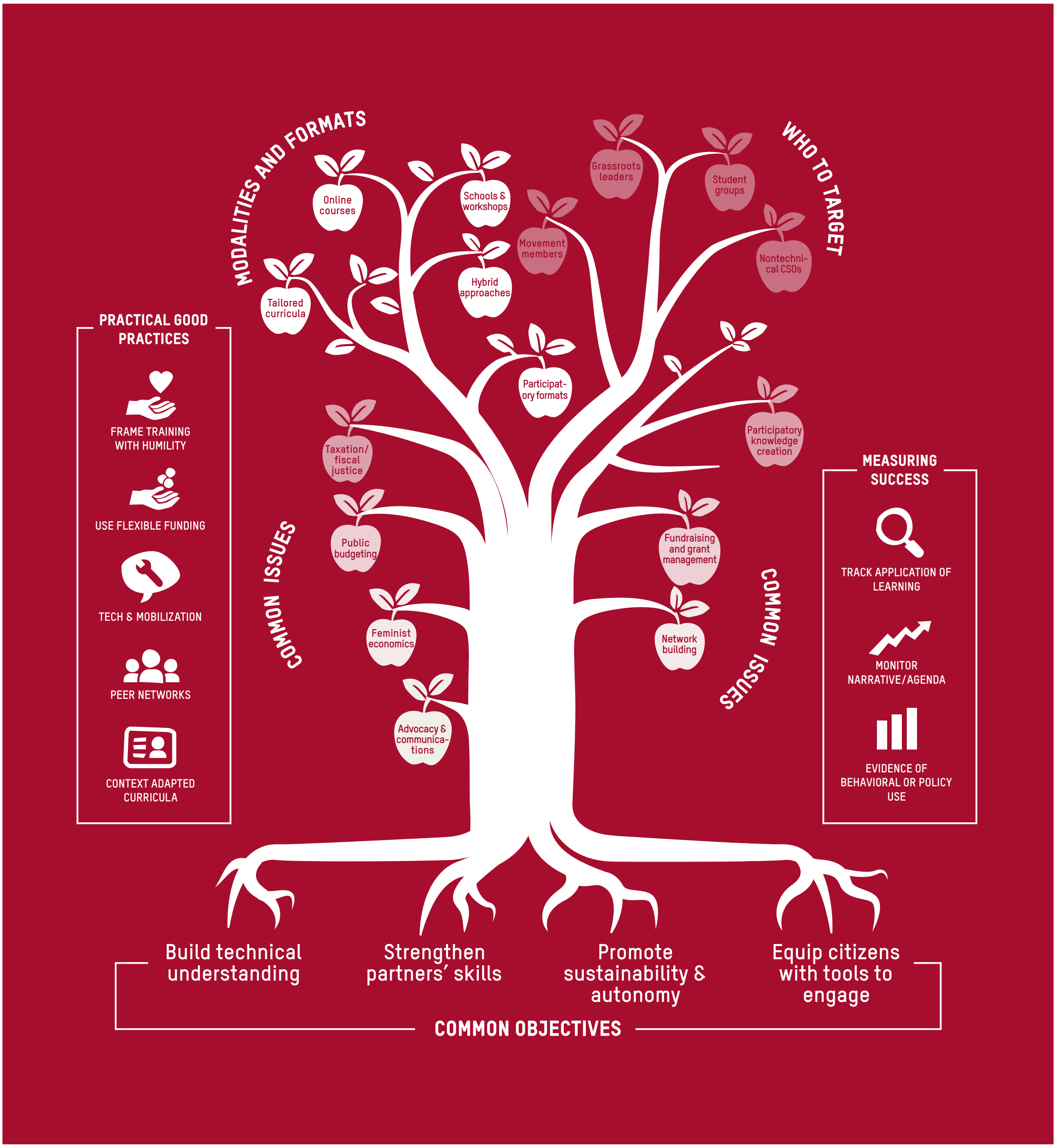
Effective alliances are grounded in a shared analysis of power and inequality, and an understanding of who holds influence, how change happens and whose voices must be centred. In this way, **strong alliances must also mirror the fairness they seek to advance**: diverse, inclusive and grounded in mutual respect. This also means conducting analysis and strategy development together.

FIGURE 1: BUILDING ALLIANCES

11.2 PILLAR 2: CAPACITY EXCHANGE

Influence begins with the capacity and confidence to act on the belief that change is possible. This also means ensuring that those with the greatest legitimacy – people with lived experience of inequality and the groups that represent them – have the opportunity to build their own power. It is also about ensuring that Oxfam's role in change is sustainable by passing the reins to the rightful drivers of transformation.

FIGURE 2: CAPACITY EXCHANGE



In Uganda, for instance, under the FAIR programme, Oxfam and partners worked to strengthen civil society capacity in budget analysis and tax advocacy. Through training, mentoring and joint evidence generation, national networks developed the confidence and expertise to engage directly with the Ministry of Finance and Parliament on fiscal justice issues.[157]

Capacity exchange for influencing inequality is about instilling confidence in partners and actors who can help shift power. Such support can take many forms, from providing core funding and technical advice, to facilitating peer learning and training. Capacities should be developed according to the priorities identified by national actors, whether in policy analysis, advocacy, campaigning or other areas they define.

It's important to engage people from the outset,[158] building analysis and strategy collaboratively with partners, allies and affected communities, rather than presenting them with finished plans as part of capacity exchange. This participatory approach ensures that capacity exchange is a process of co-creation and shared ownership. In this way, confidence and solidarity are sources of political power; power with, rather than power over, should shape how we work.

11.3 PILLAR 3: RESEARCH AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Research and policy engagement provide the evidence that underpins moral arguments and sustains credibility. **Annex 3** contains a terms of reference template for Oxfam's research publications.

Research for influencing should combine evidence with empathy, i.e., connect data to lived experience, so that statistics become stories and policies become personal. Each piece of analysis should expose who benefits and who pays, reveal the power dynamics behind inequality, and demonstrate what fairer alternatives look like through policy recommendations.

It might also produce **'killer facts'**, i.e., punchy, memorable, headline-grabbing statistics that make reports special and cut through the technicalities to fire people up about changing the world. They are known as 'killer' facts because if they are really effective, they 'kill off' the opposition's arguments. For more on this, see Duncan Green's *Creating Killer Facts and Graphics* (2019).[159]

Engaging with policymakers is most effective when it is **iterative and responsive** – identifying openings, anticipating resistance and maintaining credibility while staying rooted in public accountability.[160]

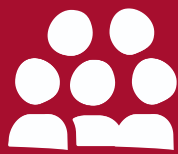
In Uganda, Oxfam and partners under the FAIR programme built a coalition of researchers, campaigners and citizen groups to strengthen tax justice advocacy. They combined gender-responsive budgeting, participatory tax audits and community dialogues to uncover how indirect taxes disproportionately affected women and low-income households. Their research and engagement with parliament and the Ministry of Finance led to parliamentary debate and a partial reversal of taxes on basic goods, while also informing civil society campaigning.[161]

FIGURE 3: A PLANNING TOOL FOR RESEARCH FOR INFLUENCING

1 WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO INFLUENCE WITH EVIDENCE?

INFLUENCING OBJECTIVE AND POSSIBLE ROLES FOR RESEARCH

- Change people's attitudes and beliefs, norms and behaviours
- Change, implement government and private sector policies and practices
- Set the policy agenda, change the terms of debate
- Inform and strengthen civil society voice and strategies



2 WHO ARE WE TRYING TO INFLUENCE WITH EVIDENCE AND HOW?

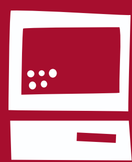
AUDIENCES AND EVIDENCE THEY RESPOND TO BEST, EG. POLICYMAKERS/POLITICIANS, CIVIL SERVANTS, ACTIVISTS, GENERAL PUBLIC, MEDIA OR ALL OF THESE.

3 FOCUS YOUR RESEARCH!

1. WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN?
2. WHAT NEW OR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH IS NEEDED, IF ANY?
3. WHAT QUESTION(S) ARE WE TRYING TO ANSWER?

4 WHAT TYPE OR MIX OF RESEARCH APPROACHES AND METHODS WILL BEST ANSWER THE RESEARCH QUESTION(S) AND ENGAGE THE TARGET AUDIENCES? OPTIONS INCLUDE:

- Macro policy research methods
- Community based research methods (to collect qualitative data)
- Community based research methods (surveys, participatory rank)
- Consider gender and intersectionality fully (record quotes, take photos!)
- Macro/micro linkages



5 HOW CAN WE ENGAGE AUDIENCES WITH THE RESEARCH PROCESS AND FINDINGS TO MAXIMISE RESEARCH INFLUENCE?

1. Refer again to your power analysis, research design and overall influencing strategy and think of ways to involve key audiences and influencers in the different stages of the research and influencing process
2. Are there important influencers whose cooperation is needed?
3. Communications: decide how to frame the research and what research projects will be most effective and user-friendly
4. Timing and messengers
5. Ensure evidence is combined with complementary influencing strategies

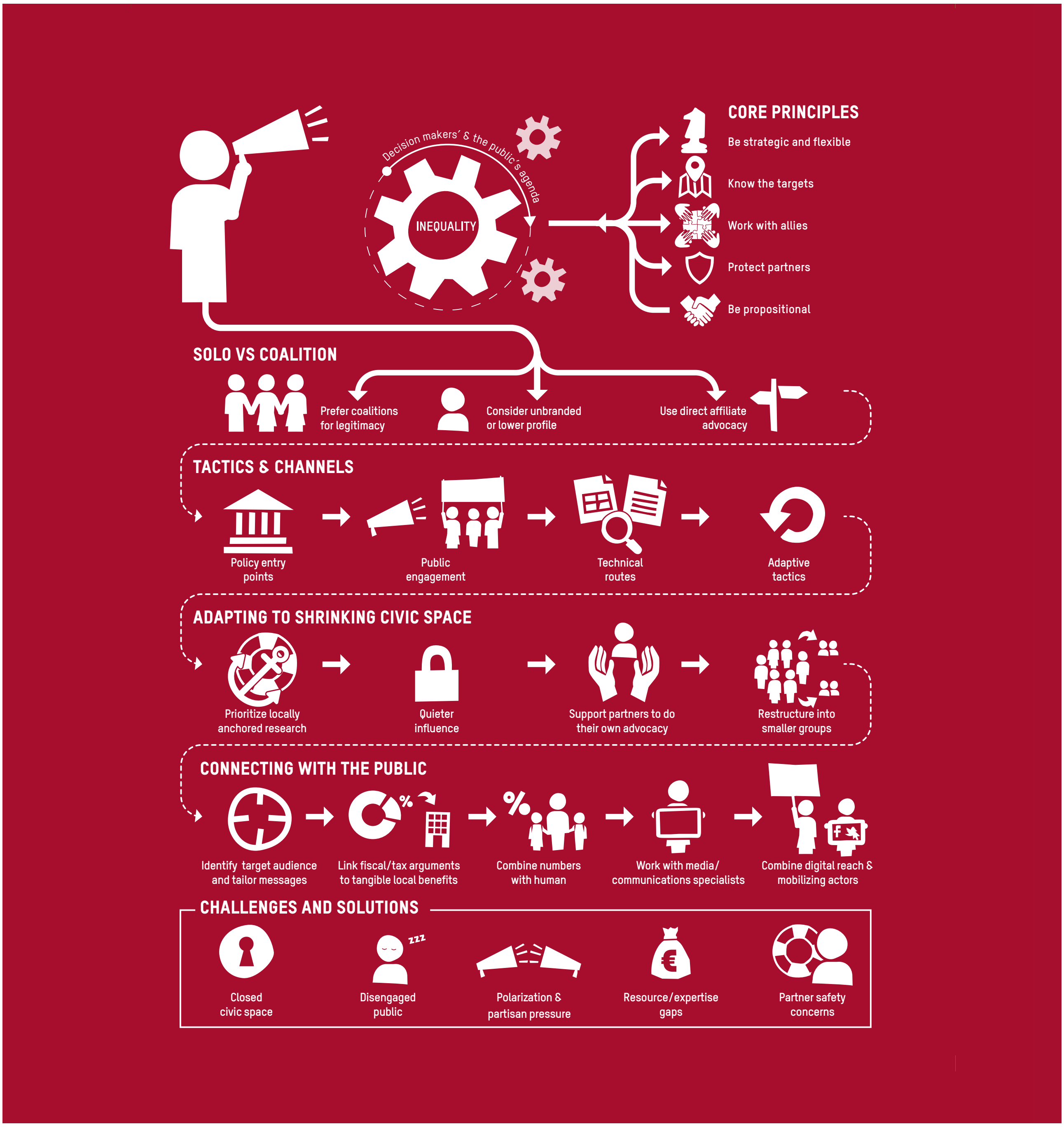
11.4 PILLAR 4: ADVOCACY AND OPPORTUNITY

Advocacy connects public voice to decision-making power, ensuring that the perspectives of citizens and movements reach those who shape policy.

This requires strategically engaging power:

- building relationships;
- attending meetings;
- submitting policy positions;
- writing lobby letters; and
- maintaining direct communication with decision-makers and influential actors in government.

FIGURE 4: ADVOCACY



Effective advocacy is adaptive.[162] It means reading the political moment and identifying 'windows of opportunity', for example where reformers inside the system can act in concert with organized voices from civil society.[163] It could also mean applying persistent pressure from outside until change happens.

Advocacy requires courage to confront power, e.g. defending civic space, amplifying marginalized voices, and leveraging both formal and informal channels to open policy processes. **The real test of good advocacy is not the number of meetings held, but whether those who were once excluded from decision-making gain a seat at the table** – and whether this leads to meaningful changes in policies, practices or outcomes.[164]

Effective advocacy is, thus, ultimately about **opening political space** by creating the trust, relationships and legitimacy that allow others to act.

11.5 PILLAR 5: CAMPAIGNS, MEDIA AND PUBLIC IMAGINATION

Campaigns, media and public engagement demand change from the outside. Sometimes they can widen or sustain advocacy opportunities, while at other times they can change the debate altogether.

The tools of public mobilization, creative communication and storytelling make the fight against inequality visible, resonant and people-powered. They shape how issues are understood, and whose voices define fairness and possibility. Campaigns and communications are not just about visibility, they are about building **narrative power**, i.e., the ability to make equality feel achievable and beneficial to society.

This includes:

- engaging local, national and international media, including social media;
- working with other creative platforms; and
- events and cultural initiatives focused on awareness-raising and participatory learning.

Values-based narratives and frames can connect evidence to people's lived experiences and moral instincts.[165] Therefore, effective framing begins with shared values – such as fairness, care, dignity and responsibility – and builds stories that move audiences from concern to action.

In the case of inequality, this may mean linking tax justice to children's right to education, showing that fair taxation is how societies recognize and share the work of building bright futures and caring for one another. It might link wealth redistribution to dignity, framing equality not as charity but as respect, i.e., that everyone deserves a life of security and self-worth. Campaigns may also frame inequality as corrosive to the social fabric, and excessive wealth accumulation as harmful to the common good.

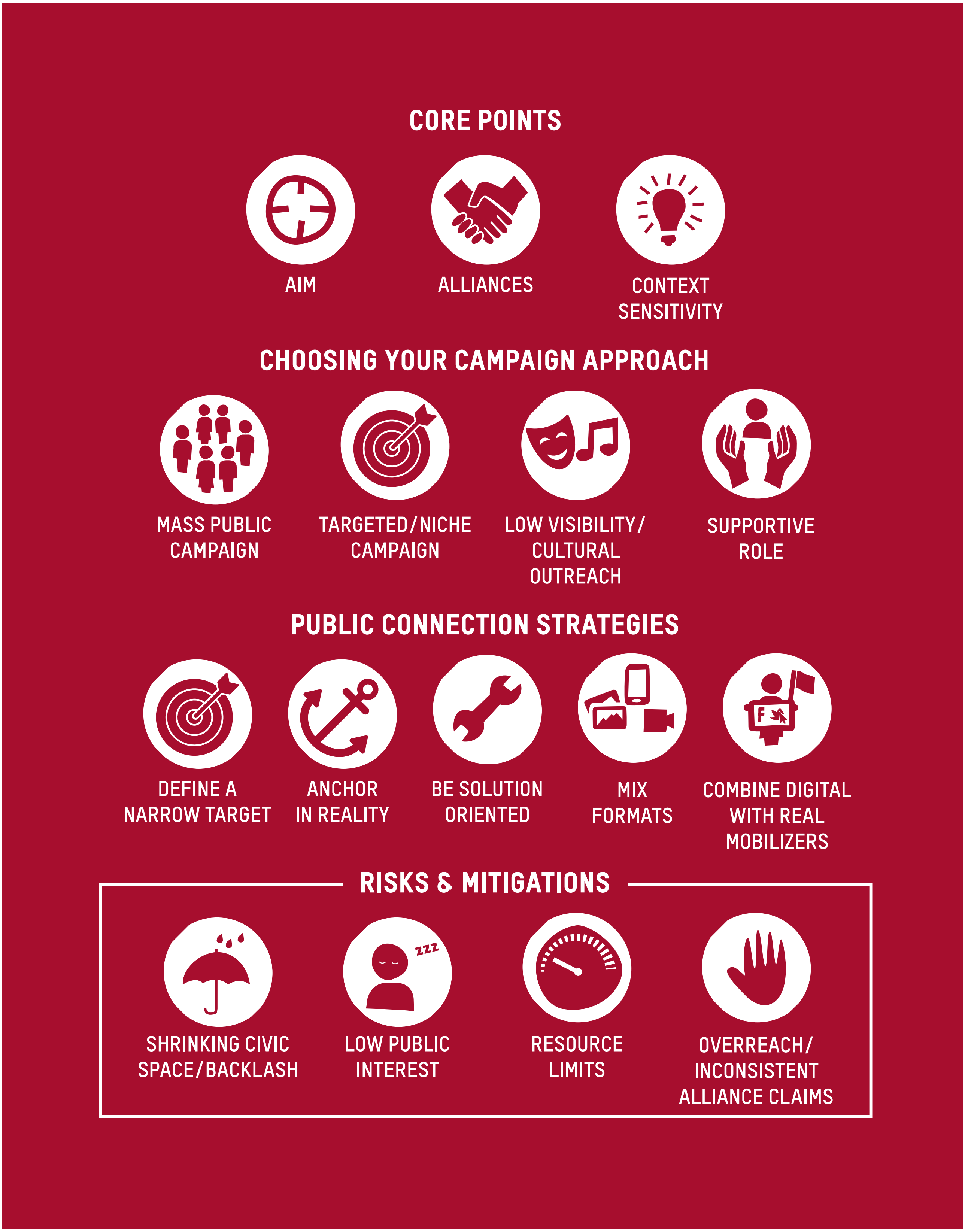
These frames help turn technical policy debates into moral questions about the kind of societies we want to build. By grounding advocacy in shared human values, campaigns reach beyond statistics. Instead, they can shape how fairness is felt and understood, and expand the space for progressive media framing and political debate.[166]

Through a range of means, from creative storytelling to art, digital mobilization and cultural activism, **campaigns connect emotion with evidence**. When people see themselves in the story, they become agents of change.

In Bangladesh, Oxfam and partners used social media and youth networks to raise awareness about unpaid care work, framing it as essential economic infrastructure. The initiative, part of Oxfam's broader We Care programme, collaborated with community groups and digital influencers to promote recognition of care work in national media and policy discussions.[167]

In Kenya, youth collectives within the FIA (see **Box 6**) have used art, murals and creative expression to make inequality visible and connect economic and social struggles. Oxfam, as one of FIA's global partners, supports these efforts by resourcing alliances and linking grassroots activism to broader campaigns for economic justice.[168]

FIG 5: CAMPAIGNS



CHAPTER 12
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

12 BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Change happens when strategy, data and analysis meet organizing power. **Effective influence must link analysis, alliances, evidence and mobilization into one coherent effort** to shift what is politically possible.

12.1 WHEN THE PILLARS WORK TOGETHER

When the five pillars (see **Chapter 11**) operate in concert, they generate the momentum needed to shift both policy and power:

- **Alliances** give demands legitimacy.
- **Capacity** builds confidence and sustains action over the long term.
- **Evidence** lends credibility.
- **Advocacy** opens doors.
- **Campaigns** change the terms of debate, push for change and keep the vision alive.

Oxfam's influencing approach anchors each pillar in shared values: equity, transparency, participation, accountability and care. Together, the pillars form an iterative cycle of analysis, action and reflection.[169] That is how the human economy becomes real. (See **Box 7** for an example.)

12.2 FROM ANALYSIS TO INFLUENCE

In order to create influence over inequality:

1. **Start with strong analysis.** Use an inequality audit to identify which inequalities most shape people's lives and which systems sustain them.
2. **Map the power.** Use power analysis tools to reveal who holds influence and where new pressure or partnerships could shift outcomes.
3. **Mobilize the influencing pillars.** Use the five pillars together so that evidence, alliances and people power reinforce one another.
4. **Connect local to global.** Link national strategies to advocacy at the global level (e.g., at the World Bank and IMF) and broader campaigns for debt justice, fair taxation and universal public services so that people can see themselves as part of global change.

12.3 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Influencing work rarely follows a straight line. Monitoring should therefore track the **direction of travel** towards shifting power and narratives toward fairness. Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning systems should also capture not only outcomes but how influence happens, e.g., whether alliances are inclusive, decisions transparent and leadership equitable.[170]

There are three complementary lenses to do this:

Policy and resource shifts. Are governments allocating more to health, education, care and social protection? Are wealth or solidarity taxes introduced? Have regressive fees or austerity measures been reversed?

Power shifts. Are alliances more diverse? Are youth groups, women's groups, unions and/or reformist officials taking leadership? Are new spaces for dialogue or accountability opening?

Narrative and norm shifts. Is fairness language more visible in media and politics? Are people expressing greater belief that inequality can be changed?

Monitoring and learning help us to see where new opportunities lie and where hope is already taking root. They also provide opportunities for reflection and collective sense-making.[171]

BOX 7: A HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE OF INFLUENCING WORK

In many countries, Oxfam and partners are showing that fighting inequality is a political and moral struggle to rebalance power, rewrite economic rules and make fairness a shared ideal.

In Country X, young activists, feminist movements and trade unions come together to mark the launch of a global inequality report. This report sets out the scale of inequality and the policies that need to change in the next five years. At the heart of these is a call for a National Inequality Plan to monitor inequality and the impact of policies on it.

The report includes 'killer facts' and stories of lived experiences connecting global injustice to daily life. It uses narratives to connect evidence to people's lived experiences and moral instincts, e.g., the impacts of the unpaid care burden on women, the communities shut out of healthcare and education, and the unequal exposure of people to climate disasters. The report also names and shames the richest people in the country, and shows how much their wealth has grown while the average citizen has struggled with high inflation. The core message: inequality is designed, and it can be redesigned. The killer facts are widely shared on social media and become the core part of the narrative.

Throughout the year, the alliance serves as a public voice on inequality, using the killer facts and narrative framing. Organizers create an 'Art for Fairness' week of murals, theatre, music and spoken word performances. Well-known artists and influencers use public spaces and social media to expose injustice and reclaim hope.

The alliance begins to better connect struggles once seen as separate into a broader inequality narrative, including:

- Teachers' unions linking wage justice to fair taxation;
- Climate activists demanding a fair share of adaptation finance;
- Care workers championing investment in public services; and
- Youth collectives reimagining the economy through design and performance.

When austerity and debt conditionalities threaten social spending, the coalition hits the streets. When the government tries to introduce austerity measures through a new finance bill as a result of IMF programme advice, the alliance can tap into public anger, while also linking to lobbying by Oxfam staff in the IMF headquarters.

Over time, the activists become more aware of other global processes and forums. They begin to champion the new UN Framework Convention on International Tax Co-operation, a body that is helping to shift global tax rule-making to give the Global South a real voice.

Their sustained work yields tangible results:

- Parliament passes a wealth tax focused on high-net-worth individuals;
- Universal child grants are introduced; and
- The alliance joins global campaigns for debt cancellation and fair taxation.

Just as importantly, the public narrative shifts: what was once 'unaffordable' or 'unrealistic' is now recognized as a fight for justice against growing inequality. Through regular content on the media, the public becomes more aware of the link between inequality and sustained poverty and injustice.

The alliance becomes ever more mature and credible, able to work for sustained results and to respond nimbly and organize around threats. They advocate for a National Inequality Plan that monitors the impact of the above policy shifts on inequality, and can demonstrate reductions in the Palma ratio or Gini over time.

ANNEXES

ANNEXES

The following annexes accompany **Chapter 10**, providing links and guidance for those wanting to go deeper at each stage – from analysis and planning to monitoring and learning. They provide:

1. Links to key tools for designing inequality-influencing work;
2. A guide on how to conduct a workshop on inequality; and
3. A terms of reference template for producing an Oxfam research publication.

ANNEX 1 KEY TOOLS FOR INFLUENCING INEQUALITY

Box A1: Key tools for influencing inequality

Focus	Tools
Data and analysis	C. Kumar. (2020). *Oxfam Inequality Toolkit*. Oxfam. https://inequalitytoolkit.org/guides/toolkit_inequality_fv.pdf Oxfam. (2017). *Oxfam Inequality Guide.* https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/oxfam-inequality-guide-620253/ C. Kumar. (2019). *Data Advocacy: The Multidimensional Inequality Framework: The Oxfam toolkit.* Oxfam. https://inequalitytoolkit.org/intermon/public/guides/data_advocacy.pdf
Power and strategy	Oxfam. (2014). *Quick Guide to Power Analysis.* https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/quick-guide-to-power-analysis-313950/ R. English. (2020). *Influencing for Impact Guide: How to deliver effective influencing strategies.* Oxfam. https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/influencing-for-impact-guide-how-to-deliver-effective-influencing-strategies-621048/ C. Safier, S. Wakefield, R. Harvey and R. Rewald. (2019). *Oxfam's Guide to Feminist Influencing.* Oxfam. https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/oxfams-guide-to-feminist-influencing-620723/
Five pillars	Oxfam. (2017). *Oxfam Inequality Guide.* https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/oxfam-inequality-guide-620253/ R. English. (2020). *Influencing for Impact Guide: How to deliver effective influencing strategies.* Oxfam. https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/influencing-for-impact-guide-how-to-deliver-effective-influencing-strategies-621048/ I. Crabtree-Condor. (2020). *Narrative Power and Collective Action: Conversations with people working to change narratives for social good – Part 1.* https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/narrative-power-and-collective-action-conversations-with-people-working-to-chan-621020/ I. Crabtree-Condor. (2020). *Narrative Power and Collective Action: Conversations with people working to change narratives for social good – Part 2.* https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/narrative-power-and-collective-action-conversations-with-people-working-to-chan-621085/ Oxfam. (2026). *GINI in a Bottle: Distilling Learnings from Implementing Countries.* https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/gini-bottle-distilling-learnings-implementing-countries
Monitoring, learning and adaptation	R. English. (2020). *Influencing for Impact Guide: How to deliver effective influencing strategies.* Oxfam. https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/influencing-for-impact-guide-how-to-deliver-effective-influencing-strategies-621048/ Oxfam. (n.d.). *MEL-of-Influencing Toolkit.* https://melofinfluencing.org

ANNEX 2 CONDUCTING A WORKSHOP ON INEQUALITY

This is a lightly adapted version of the tool included in the Annex of the Oxfam Inequality Guide (2017)

Workshops on inequality can bring together NGO teams, partners, allies, researchers and community representatives to build a shared understanding of inequality and identify priorities for action. They provide a space to combine data analysis with lived experience, and to reflect on how existing programmes can better address inequality.

The format below is flexible and should be adapted to context. The framework consists of four objectives.

A2.1 UNDERSTAND WHAT INEQUALITY LOOKS LIKE IN YOUR CONTEXT

Explore and analyse evidence on inequality across different dimensions (e.g., income, gender, geography, identity, access to services, etc.). This includes identifying who is most affected and how inequalities intersect.

POSSIBLE APPROACHES

- Present key data and trends using national and global sources.
- Invite researchers, activists or practitioners to share insights.
- Work in small groups to explore datasets and identify key patterns.
- Reflect on participants' own experiences of inequality and opportunity.
- Identify gaps in available data and whose experiences are missing.

A2.2 IDENTIFY THE MAIN DRIVERS OF INEQUALITY

Analyse the structural, political and social factors that sustain inequality.

POSSIBLE APPROACHES

- Use a structured framework (e.g. taxation, public services, labour markets, care, climate, civic space).
- Facilitate group discussions on
  - Who benefits from the current system?
  - Who is excluded or marginalized?
  - What policies, norms or power dynamics drive these outcomes?
- Introduce basic power analysis (visible, hidden and invisible power).

A2.3 REFLECT ON CURRENT PROGRAMMES AND STRATEGIES

Assess how existing work contributes to reducing inequality and where gaps remain.

POSSIBLE APPROACHES

- Map current programmes against key inequality drivers.
- Identify which groups are reached and which are excluded.
- Discuss whether programmes address root causes or symptoms.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen an inequality lens.

A2.4 IDENTIFY PRIORITIES FOR ACTION AND INFLUENCING

Translate analysis into practical next steps.

POSSIBLE APPROACHES

- Prioritize two or three key inequality issues or domains.
- Identify potential policy changes or advocacy entry points.
- Map key actors, allies and decision-makers.
- Explore opportunities for coalition-building or movement engagement.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR FACILITATION

- **Centre lived experience.** Ensure the voices of those most affected by inequality are actively included and prioritized.
- **Use disaggregated data.** Combine quantitative data with qualitative insights to capture intersecting inequalities.
- **Be participatory.** Use interactive methods to build shared understanding and ownership.
- **Focus on power.** Go beyond describing inequality to analysing who holds power and how change can happen.
- **Be action-oriented.** Ensure the workshop leads to clear next steps for programming or influencing.

A2.5 OUTPUTS

By the end of the workshop, participants should have:

- A shared understanding of key inequalities and who is most affected;
- A clearer analysis of the main drivers and power dynamics;
- Identified gaps in current programmes or strategies;
- Agreed priority areas and potential actions for reducing inequality.

ANNEX 3 TEMPLATE FOR PUBLICATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

Information required	To be completed
Commissioning manager	XXX
Author(s)	XXX
Project manager	XXX
Type of paper e.g., research report, briefing note, media brief, etc.	XXX
Oxfam Campaign e.g., inequality campaign	XXX
Publishing partner List the publishing partners or allies for cobranding.	XXX
Expected length Word count	e.g 10,000 words
Purpose Why is this being commissioned, and why now? How does to contribute to the campaign?	This paper is being commissioned because extreme and growing inequality is one of the greatest crises of our times, both globally and within countries, as well as between them. Indeed, the gaps between the richest and the rest have not only reached staggering proportions but continue to widen, exacerbated by frequent crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, wars, geological competitions and climate change. While a few amass enormous wealth, billions of people are facing poverty, hunger, declining wages and inaccessible essential services like healthcare, livable housing or education. The wealthy elite are concentrating political power, eroding the effectiveness of – and trust in – public institutions and damaging people's rights to hold power into account. Understanding how inequality manifests itself, i.e. what its drivers and consequences are, is important before designing and implementing a policy mix to reduce it. The purpose of this paper is to identify inequality trends, drivers, consequences and policy interventions to drastically reduce it at the national level. It aims to: • Produce knowledge on inequality trends, including killer facts to illustrate the gap between the rich and the rest, the causes and consequences of economic inequality, and policy recommendations. • Position Oxfam as a thought leader on the inequality debate in the country and potentially pave the way for the development of an inequality campaign strategy that is rooted in the country context. • To provide a foundational base to build relationships and alliances with civil society organizations, academics and opinion leaders engaged in the national inequality debate.

<table>
<tr><td>Audience
For whom is it being written? Who are we trying to influence? What kind of tone/style will the paper adopt? Please list primary and secondary audiences. What are your plans to launch to these audiences? Which are the key target countries?</td><td>Primary audience
General public, policymakers, media, politicians

Secondary audience
academics, civil society organizations, trade unions</td></tr>
<tr><td>Proposition
What is the paper's core argument and policy recommendation(s)? Include specific gender/women's rights points here if possible. What impact will this have on poverty?</td><td>This paper will offer a snapshot of inequality in Country X, showing how it has grown/shrunk/stayed the same over recent years; how market fundamentalism and political capture have contributed to these trends; and what can be done to tackle inequality, especially in terms of labour rights, taxation and public services. It will show how economic inequality intersects with other inequalities, especially gender inequality. This paper will provide evidence and identify key programme and policy areas for future intervention. To do this, it will answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent is extreme and rising economic inequality evident in Country X and likely to be a problem for the country's development progress?
2. What are the main drivers of economic inequality in Country X? What is the role of market fundamentalism/ neoliberalism? What is the role of political capture?
3. What is the interaction between economic inequality and other inequalities, including gender, ethnicity and geography?
4. What policies are in place in Country X that reinforce/perpetuate or reduce inequalities?
5. What opportunities (limitations) are there for progressive policymaking in Country X?</td></tr>
</table>

Contents List the contents of the paper in detail, including estimated page extents for each section. Include killer facts where possible, and identify how you will incorporate gender justice issues.	**This paper will:** • Provide insight into the inequality dynamics in Country X to enable Oxfam's work to take this into account in future planning and programming. • Articulate the damaging impact of extreme and rising inequalities where these exist, or how a progressive approach to development is beneficial for society and a model for other countries. • Identify opportunities for Oxfam to engage at the local and/or national level for programming/campaigning that effectively reduce inequalities and sustain a more egalitarian development path. Contents will follow the structure of the research questions outlined above: **Section 1: The facts about inequality in Country X (1500 words)** • Trends and trajectories for the distribution of income and wealth. • Impact of inequality on poverty, social mobility, growth and social stability, particularly conflict, crime and security in the medium to long term. • Comparison to other countries at similar income levels. • Killer facts on the scale of the problem. **Section 2: Drivers of inequality (1500 words)** • The extent of marginalization and exclusion based on gender (drawing on analysis of unpaid care work where available), ethnicity, geography and other inequalities. • The extent to which access to productive resources and opportunities for gainful employment are restricted and unevenly distributed. • The influence of neoliberalism, market fundamentalism and structural adjustment. • The effect of political capture by elites. • Illustrative examples and stories, e.g., the economic, social and political barriers faced by excluded groups, and their resulting position on the income distribution; examples of extreme wealth, naming names wherever possible. **Section 3: Inequality is not inevitable: Policy choices and implementation (1500)** • The growth and development model being pursued. • Policies on access to productive resources. • Policies on work and wages. • The incidence of taxation, e.g., the damaging impact of VAT on people living in poverty; limted taxation of rich people; tax breaks for companies. • An assessment of the progressivity of public spending, including public service provision and social protection. This should focus on issues like user fees, privatization of services, and private schooling. • Killer facts on tax incidence/public spending choices. **Section 5: Space for progressive policymaking (1000)** • Mapping the role and objectives of policy actors, including political parties/factions, NGOs and the private sector. • Inequalities of power generally in society, and specifically in political processes and decision making (CSO space vs economic elites). • Opportunities: identify progressive/regressive leaders and narratives to tap into. • Challenges: potential for social divides and conflict to restrict inclusive policymaking space, and evidence of political capture. **Conclusion (500)** Identify opportunities for Oxfam to better work in the context of the inequalities evident in Country X, and to pursue policies and policymaking spaces that have the potential to reduce inequalities. **Total words: 6000**

Web content How will this briefing paper be used and shared online? Will it be suitable for support by any of the following materials: • Blog • Video material • PowerPoint presentation	This paper should provide enough material to develop local advocacy needs (e.g., one-pagers, mini-case studies, infographics, score cards, videos, life stories of ordinary people in Country X living under extreme inequality, etc.)
Programme connections How will the paper link policy to Oxfam's programme experience? Which countries will be involved?	It will be designed to provide appropriate content for Country X's overall strategy and for specific programmes that address inequalities at the local and national level.
Gender How does this paper/ report incorporate gender justice and women's rights into its argument? Please include information on this if appropriate in the 'Contents' and 'Proposition' sections. How does the paper look at either the power relations between men and women, or the disproportionate impact of unjust policy on women as they relate to the issue in question? What existing research will it draw on?	It will illuminate the ways in which economic inequality intersects with other inequalities, especially gender inequality, creating traps of disadvantage. The report will build a case for tackling economic inequality with an approach that recognizes gendered roles and women's rights. It will aim at a more equal distribution of paid and unpaid work between men and women, access to productive assets and the power to influence, particularly at the policy level.
Sensitivities What are the risks in publishing this paper? (E.g. risk to staff security or to the programme; risk to Oxfam's reputation; risk to Oxfam's identity; quality of product and content; consistency with plans and priorities.)	Tone should be balanced and evidence-based. We will rely on strong quantitative analysis and concrete recommendations. We will be mindful of national sensitivities.
Translation requirements Specify whether the full text needs translating into Oxfam's core languages (French, Spanish, English). List any other languages needed, explain how they will be used, and confirm that there are funds allocated for this. Please note: if the full text is to be translated, all language versions should publish together.	XXX

Libel check Will this paper require a libel check by a legal expert? (for example if company names are mentioned and there is a libel risk)	XXX

PRODUCTION SCHEDULE		
No.	**Topic**	**Number of working days**
1	TOR ready	
2		
3	Revision by authors	
4	Edit (4000 words/day)	
5	Authors revision of edited version	
6	**Sign-offs** (allow 5 days minimum) • Policy leads • Countries, affiliates (provided they are mentioned)	
7	Author's revision based on signed-off comments	
8	Final signed-off draft ready	
9	**Translations** (1000 words/day) and design	
10	**Preparation of final PDFs etc.** At least two full working days are needed to prepare papers for online publishing and produce the final PDFs	
11	**Publication date** Mention any specific pegs or events, and whether an embargo will be in place. If there is no specific external hook, what flexibility is there around the publication date? Please note: final files are needed by media and web teams at least three working days before the embargo date.	

12	**Distribution** List here any specific distribution requirements (both electronic and hard copy) for this particular paper (e.g. to specific targets, policy/ media specialists, listserves, networks etc). All OI papers have a standard distribution procedure which will be automatically followed, and which includes: • Authoring affiliate website/ intranet • OI website • Sumus • External contacts (general)	
13	Publication date	

All links last accessed 7 May 2026 unless otherwise specified.

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