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Humanitarian
Policy Group

From the Grass-Roots to the Security Council: Oxfam's Humanitarian Advocacy in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda

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About the Humanitarian Policy Group

The Humanitarian Policy Group at ODI is one of the world's leading teams of independent researchers and information professionals working on humanitarian issues. It is dedicated to improving humanitarian policy and practice through a combination of high-quality analysis, dialogue and debate.

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Acronyms

ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
AMIS	African Union Mission in Sudan
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPD	Campaigns and Policy Division (Oxfam)
CPM	Country Programme Manager (Oxfam)
DJAM	Darfur Joint Assessment Mission
DPA	Darfur Peace Agreement
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations (United Nations)
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
EUFOR	European Union Force in the DRC
FARDC	Forces Armées de la Republic Democratic du Congo
GOS	Government of Sudan
GOU	Government of Uganda
HAC	Humanitarian Affairs Commission
HAG	Humanitarian Advocacy Group (DRC)
HAP	Humanitarian Appeals Process
HC/RC	Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator
HSP	Humanitarian Support Professional (Oxfam)
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MONUC	United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in DRC
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NALU	National Army for Liberation of Uganda
OI	Oxfam International
POC	Protection of Civilians
QIPs	Quick Impact Projects
RiC	Rights in Crisis (Oxfam)
R2A	Right to Assistance (Oxfam)
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SLA/M	Sudan Liberation Army/Movement
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
UNAMID	United Nations-African Mission in Darfur
UN SC	United Nations Security Council
WATSAN	Water and Sanitation

1. Executive Summary[1]

This learning review is a broad overview of Oxfam's advocacy work in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo and northern Uganda. Its main focus is on *how* Oxfam works, rather than on the issues it prioritises. It draws on interviews with Oxfam staff as well as key policy makers in each context to provide insights into where Oxfam GB has had influence where it hasn't, and the reasons for this. With case study reviews on each context, the objective is to document advocacy practice, as well as inform future activities.

1.1 Key findings

Oxfam's has unmatched capacity in humanitarian advocacy, which has influenced policy and practice in each context. Oxfam's work through CSOPNU played an important role in helping to raise awareness of the need for a political, rather than a military solution, to the crisis in northern Uganda. Oxfam was also significant in ensuring that protection featured strongly in MONUC's mandate in the DRC, and that the humanitarian consequences of military operations were mitigated. Intensive advocacy led by Oxfam in Khartoum has helped to reduce bureaucratic restrictions on the relief effort in Darfur, an effort which is helping to sustain 4 million people. Oxfam was also instrumental in supporting people's protection in Darfur; through encouraging and facilitating firewood patrols by peacekeepers as well as in halting forcible disarmament in Darfur's largest displacement camp. These are just a few of Oxfam's important achievements. They have come about as a result of the organisation's unique capacity for well-informed, coordinated advocacy, from the grass-roots right up to the Security Council. Drawing on information gained through policy engagement in multiple international locations, and up-to-date analysis and messaging which is made possible through clear coordination structures, Oxfam's unequalled access can ensure parallel lobbying across African and international capitals. Oxfam has a reservoir of knowledge on protection and humanitarian assistance, in addition to a well-honed advocacy machine that can be drawn upon for international advocacy in other contexts.

The effectiveness of Oxfam's international advocacy is, however, undermined by insufficient linkages with programme issues and staff, while in turn programmes are undermined by inadequate advocacy support. This is not just a question of credibility, although this is also at risk, particularly at the national level and within the humanitarian community. Interviewees, both within Oxfam and outside, believe that the organisation's work on protection in particular is undermined because its approach is insufficiently coherent. However, it also impacts other programmatic work. The lack of prioritisation of policy issues relating to Oxfam's core water and sanitation expertise, as well of how inequitable or weak access to resources impact on crises was also criticised. The 'One Programme Approach' is working better in some contexts than in others, but this approach should be backed up with resources. An increase in national policy work would, arguably, have more immediate impact on people's lives, as well as establish the basis for sustained policy change at the national level.

Oxfam has built up an impressive portfolio of tactics and tools for its international advocacy, and is finding creative ways of working in or around hostile environments. Coordinated and mutually-reinforcing analysis and lobbying in international capitals as well as nationally and locally is particularly effective, as is Oxfam's growing ability to draw on allies and contacts so that core messages can be delivered without attribution to the agency. Rigorous work brings rewards. Evidence-based advocacy underpinned with a strong strategy has proved very effective in raising awareness of humanitarian issues Uganda and the DRC. However, experience has also shown that targeted and timely policy briefs may be more effective in achieving specific policy change. The availability of pre-existing guidelines, tools and thinking has increased Oxfam's influence in situations ranging from civil–military discussions in Sudan to media work to put pressure on donors to contribute their 'fair share' in the DRC. But Oxfam has to be careful not to simply transfer these tactics to African contexts, where cultural differences demand alternative approaches.

The organisation has yet to learn how to overcome the asymmetry in policy and advocacy between itself and other organisations. Many partnerships are extractive, or at least are perceived as such. This affects not only Oxfam's reputation, but also its interests. Both the safety and effectiveness of

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[1] This Executive Summary draws heavily on the Conclusions, Learning and Recommendations chapter of this report.

advocacy is increased through partnerships with other organisations, as has been clearly demonstrated in Uganda and Sudan, but this demands time, flexibility and patience, all of which are often lacking in Oxfam's fast-paced advocacy world. Oxfam has not prioritised working with national partners in advocacy, and this is a major gap. It will become all the more important as Oxfam tries to increase its influence in Africa.

When it comes to policy and advocacy, Oxfam's staff are its greatest assets. There is little investment, however, in supporting them to develop their skills. The strong emphasis on international advocacy has also meant that the advocacy capacity of national and programmatic staff is frequently ignored, though this is a significant resource. This is one reason for the lack of diversity that is evident within Oxfam's policy and advocacy staff. While significant knowledge and expertise are being developed on protection and humanitarian assistance, too much time and thinking is lost through a lack of investment in learning. Learning and recommendations for improved practice are clustered into six different areas below. More details and analysis are provided in the full report.

1.2 Recommendations

Increasing national level advocacy

i. *Oxfam should consider greater investment in policy on programmatic issues at national level.* A division exists between Oxfam's policy and advocacy at an international level and its national-level programming. Oxfam could potentially consider re-balancing its current focus on international issues and international influence in favour of greater policy and advocacy at national and local levels. It could seek to more effectively draw on policy issues emerging from its programmes, as well as supporting greater engagement by programmatic staff in advocacy. This has a number of implications:

ii. *Oxfam should consider complementing the capacity and resources it has invested in international policy and advocacy with capacity and resources at national level.* The potential of employing policy / advocacy positions, similar in scale to those currently hired at the international level, to coordinate and develop national level policy and advocacy should be considered.

iii. *The coordination mechanism currently operating at an international level could be replicated by a similar configuration at national levels.* The programme in DRC has a similar model where programme and policy staff engage in regular national teleconferences on policy / advocacy issues. Other initiatives such as identifying policy / advocacy focal points in programmes sites should also be explored. In the event that additional capacity is hired to work on national level issues, this position would serve as a natural interface with international policy positions, ensuring that increased coherence between national and international issues.

iv. *Greater support should be provided to programme staff to develop their capacity in advocacy and to increase their engagement in ongoing international and national level work.* In particular, greater efforts should be made to include national staff in policy analysis where this is possible, and to develop mechanisms where this is fed into Oxfam's national and international policy/advocacy work. The current workload that many of the advocacy / policy coordinators experience means it requires additional support to be undertaken effectively.

v. *Greater links with protection staff:* In the absence of increased national level capacity and resources for advocacy, greater links should be sought with protection staff in order to ensure greater complementarity between international and national policy and advocacy, to better support practical efforts to increase protection and to include information and analysis emerging from protection programmes.

Contexts: Timeliness and Scope of Engagement

i. *The scope and duration of Oxfam's engagement in priority contexts needs clarification.* This review has highlighted that engagement in issues of international relevance in a context can have the effect of obscuring other important policy issues, as is the case in Sudan in relation to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Increasing national level advocacy in priority countries may also facilitate Oxfam's engagement in broader and more long-term issues.

ii. *Oxfam should consider including a monitoring function in its Campaign and Policy Division in order to facilitate early engagement in emerging crises or new developments in ongoing crises.* This review has shown that Oxfam has significant strength in raising and maintaining awareness of issues and highlighting humanitarian implications to international policy makers, which could used for impact on new crises.

Tactics and Tools

i. *Research has proved a useful tool for raising awareness.* Research is particularly powerful where there is an absence of information on or awareness of an issue (humanitarian reform in DRC, humanitarian context in northern Uganda) and to counter prevailing attitudes and underpin a strong advocacy position (northern Uganda). However, experience in Uganda indicates that while independent research is useful for advocacy, the research must be in a format suitable for advocacy (approximately 40-50 pages); it must be underpinned by a strong dissemination and advocacy strategy that takes account of the amount of time involved in undertaking research (often 6 – 12 months). Experiences in both DRC and Uganda indicate that while research is useful to raise general awareness, it is often not the most effective tool for promoting changes in specific policies in the absence of a dedicated follow-up strategy on these issues.

ii. *Timely policy briefs and policy drawing on field-based evidence are particularly effective in changing policy or practice.* Oxfam's work in collating field-based experiences in order to inform and strengthen its policy recommendations has proved effective in relation to Sudan and DRC. Oxfam's relatively unique capability to capture experiences at the ground level and use them to inform international advocacy is a tremendous asset. Despite the often heavy capacity requirements, this approach should be utilised wherever possible.

iii. *The availability of pre-existing guidelines and tools increases Oxfam's potential for influence.* Oxfam's civil-military guidelines were instrumental in ensuring Oxfam's influence on this issue in Sudan and the 'fair

share' media tool was effective in highlighting different donor contributions in DRC. The Campaigns and Policy Department should be responsible for determining and maintaining Oxfam's position on key issues such as the use of military force, sanctions, civil–military relations and ensuring that these policy positions and other policy tools are made available to policy leads in-country.

iv. *Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are useful in translating policy into practice.* Oxfam has had success in informing or agreeing benchmarks in both Sudan and DRC. The agreement of benchmarks is helpful as it facilitates Oxfam's work in promoting accountability to agreed policy positions. Oxfam's research in Uganda on community perspectives of peace offers a useful model for the organisation when engaging in political peace processes as the success of a peace process can be monitored over time and measured in terms of its impact on communities; a potentially less controversial means of engaging on political issues. Finally, where it is possible, the establishment and/or engagement in inter-agency monitoring or oversight mechanisms should be promoted. As the experience in Sudan regarding bureaucratic restrictions demonstrates, they provide a very useful mechanism in ensuring that policy decisions are implemented.

v. *Coordinated lobbying at international and national levels increases impact on both policy and practice.* Oxfam's in-country credibility and influence is increased by virtue of its knowledge of international processes and conversely its legitimacy internationally is grounded in its field presence. Coordination mechanisms such as international conference calls are particularly useful when focused on practical actions. Where coordinated advocacy is mutually-reinforcing it is particularly effective, but greater recognition of, and support to, in-country advocacy is required. Oxfam's work at the Security Council is particularly effective, especially where specific text is provided for inclusion in Security Council resolutions.

vi. *Oxfam has useful experience in the use of non-attributable media in hostile environments.* The experience of working on

Darfur and more recently in Uganda prove that investing in relationships with trusted journalists, non-operational allies and development of creative media activities means that media activities are possible, even in the most restrictive environments. This body of work should be documented to inform ongoing and future work in restrictive environments.

vii. *Influencing non-traditional targets requires new approaches.* Recent developments in Oxfam to increase the organisation's influence on non-traditional donors are positive, but there is concern that Oxfam is trying to transfer models and approaches tested in the West. The example of the 'Women Leaders Trip' suggests culturally-appropriate initiatives have greater chances of success, but such initiatives must form part of a wider, long-term and context-specific strategy for building Oxfam's influence amongst new and different audiences.

Work Processes

i. *Oxfam's analysis could be strengthened through greater engagement with national staff and local civil society.* Oxfam's analysis was widely commended by external stakeholders, but internal concerns about weak analysis could potentially be addressed by more effective engagement with local actors.

ii. *Oxfam's advocacy strategies and activities require focusing in order to achieve greater impact.* The high number of different activities undertaken by Oxfam means that policy and advocacy work risks being reactive, too diverse and lacking sufficient follow-through. Greater efforts should be made at the strategy-setting stage to ensure that strategies are a clear expression of achievable objectives and activities, with the regional office serving as a quality control mechanism where required. In-country policy leads and Country Programme Managers should challenge requests for information as well as abstain from activities which don't reinforce the strategy.

iii. *Oxfam should continue to consistency apply frameworks and policies for managing risk.* Oxfam manages risk well, particularly when programme and national staff are engaged in

risk analysis. Experience shows that risk increases when there is a change in media strategy, when the use of inflammatory language should be approached with caution. Passing information confidentially to trusted interlocutors is an effective way of managing risk, and current controls over lobbyists' interactions with key targets could perhaps be lessened where the lobbyists are experienced staff.

iv. *Oxfam could improve monitoring, evaluation and learning.* There should be greater prioritisation of monitoring and learning in order to build on Oxfam's experience in advocacy. Oxfam should draw on the media department's monitoring and evaluation models to consider how they might apply to advocacy work and consideration should be given to the inclusion of monitoring activities in advocacy strategies. Ad hoc reviews of new or creative initiatives should be undertaken to guide ongoing work and when evaluations are undertaken they should be more widely shared. Greater advantage could be taken of outgoing staff to ensure that learning is not lost, including potentially supporting them to write up lessons. Oxfam should consider the creation of an advocacy / policy learning website where advocacy tools, policies and evaluations can be accessed.

v. *Oxfam could capture more in-depth policy learning from Darfur, DRC and Uganda where developments on key international issues* (for instance on R2P, peacekeeping, UN coordination and reform, civil military relations). The potential of employing a former policy adviser departing one of these countries should be investigated. Oxfam could also potentially see whether there might be interest in such a learning exercise amongst academic institutions. Oxfam should consider undertaking an in-depth study of its influence on a specific policy process, such as the mandate of peace-keepers in a particular context to understand policy levers and to judge its impact on the ground.

Allies and Partners

i. *Working with others, especially in hostile environments, should be a priority, but Oxfam needs to better manage the asymmetry in capacity that exists between it*

and other organisations. Where the opportunity and relationships exist, collective action increases Oxfam's effectiveness and should be prioritised. The additional time and capacity required to engage in collective action should be recognised and built into strategies and planning from the outset. Oxfam should also recognise that its relative strength in advocacy means that it is likely to take on a leadership role in any collective effort. Greater consideration of power imbalances are required and genuine consultation is needed if relationships are to endure. Where representational roles are agreed, clear parameters should be determined in advance and the representational, as opposed to autonomous, authority that derives should be respected. Compromises will be required and the possibility of devolving sign-off capability to a senior staff member once strategy has been agreed should be considered.

ii. *Oxfam's record in working on advocacy with national civil society is poor.* Despite Oxfam's commitment to working with others, this is neither a priority nor a success when it comes to national partners. As a leading organisation in advocacy, Oxfam pays inadequate attention to the impact of its work in eclipsing national voices. When it partners with national organisations, greater sensitivity to the asymmetry is required, with the lessons outlined above even more applicable. Where capacity-building is undertaken, this should be pursued as a capacity-building rather than advocacy project. Should Oxfam pursue greater policy influence amongst untraditional donors or at the national level, more effective partnerships with national civil society will be required.

iii. *Working through consortia is time- and resource-heavy but worth the cost where an effective mechanism exists or can be built.* Experience from Uganda shows that working in coalitions has a number of potential benefits including increasing influence and access, decreasing risks and especially where the consortia includes national organisations; enhanced information, analysis and credibility. Lessons suggest that working through consortia is likely to be more effective for raising awareness and galvanising action than for influencing

change on a detailed set of policy prescriptions. Consortia work best when they develop organically, when a core set of four or five individuals have the interest and capacity to affect change, and the space, both within the coalition and their respective organisations, to operate. They benefit from clear structures and processes, in particular clarity on the overall objective, MOUs, and working procedures such as sign-off and management structures. A secretariat and funding is useful in order to provide dedicated capacity, but this needs to be handled carefully as they can detract from the commitment of consortia members. In general, the secretariat should be of similar seniority and experience as that of its members in order to provide both a coordination and leadership function. A coalition may have difficultly adapting to a change in context, priorities or personnel and thus the membership should be willing to accept that it should be disbanded or adapted when appropriate.

Capacities and Resources

i. *Oxfam's capacity and resources in advocacy are adequate but stretched, more investment will be required should Oxfam pursue new priorities or approaches.* Approximate spends on humanitarian advocacy indicate that it accounts for up to 6% of humanitarian programme expenditure. However, these figures are not accurate and a more comprehensive examination of expenditure on advocacy on different countries within and outside the Rights in Crisis framework should be undertaken. This will allow better monitoring of expenditure against outcomes; fairer allocation of support across different contexts, and can form the basis of arguments for increased support. More resources would mean greater capacity for research, international lobbying and local capacity-building. New resources are required if new activities or objectives (such as increasing national level policy and advocacy work), are undertaken.

ii. *Oxfam's policy/advocacy staff are highly competent, but would benefit from skills training.* Greater support could be provided to staff to increase their skills and capacity in lobbying, negotiation and influence, especially in terms of adopting different styles for different audiences. Transitions

could be better handled; greater direction and support are required to ensure consistency at entry and exit phases. Mentoring new staff works well and should be considered where possible.

iii. *Oxfam should integrate a long-term objective of increasing staff diversity into any 'Africa-wide' campaigning strategies.* The typical profile of Oxfam's policy/advocacy staff is a young, western woman, which has implications in terms of capacity-building, as well as Oxfam's influence on non-western targets. Short-term measures to increase national staff involvement and capacity could include: increased training of programme staff so that advocacy is more consistently included in programme activities; greater involvement of senior national staff in international lobbying in capitals, as well as longer-term policy/advocacy secondments to headquarters. However, without resources and expertise, the bias towards western staff will not be addressed; a critical issue if Oxfam is to increase its influence in Africa.

iv. *The work of programme staff in advocacy could be better supported and capitalised upon.* The interest and capacity of Country Programme Managers is critical to the quality and quantity of advocacy undertaken in different contexts. Greater direction on this role could be provided, as there is inconsistency in approaches and prioritisation which is especially evident during transitions. Programme staff spend up to 25% of their time on advocacy, but there is a gulf between their work and that undertaken internationally. Despite the 'One-Programme' approach, policy staff are often quite separate to programmes. Closer links with programmes also allows messages to be more finally tuned, risk can be managed more carefully and issues emerging from programmes can be given higher priority. Oxfam should also consider investing dedicated resources and capacity to support national level policy and advocacy. Training should also be provided to programme staff so that specific policy objectives can be introduced into programming. This could be undertaken by the national policy staff where relevant, or by the Regional Management Office in their absence.

v. *Roles and responsibilities could be better clarified.* Regional and headquarter support functions could be better delineated, with skills and training support perhaps falling to the region and technical and thematic functions residing in headquarters.

2. Darfur case study

2.1 Background

Following decades of marginalisation and exclusion, intermittent violence in Darfur spilled over into major conflict in 2003 with a joint attack by two rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). In response, the Government of Sudan (GOS) launched a military counter-insurgency, bolstering its weak army with local pro-government Arab tribal militias – the so-called '*Janjaweed*'. The counter-insurgency included attacks on civilians, murder, torture, the destruction of villages, rape and the forced displacement of mainly Zaghawa, Massalit and Fur ethnic groups, in order to curtail support for the insurgents. Large-scale military attacks peaked in late 2003 and early 2004, but the conflict has continued. Humanitarian access to Darfur was purposefully curtailed by the GOS until late May 2004, and access problems have been a persistent challenge for humanitarian organisations.

Violence continued throughout 2004 and 2005, despite intermittent peace talks and the deployment of an African Union force (the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS)) in August 2004 to monitor the N'Djamena Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement, signed the previous April. The Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), signed in May 2006, was rejected by a faction of the SLM/A, prompting renewed violence and further splintering of rebel groups. On 31 August 2006, the UN Security Council expanded the mandate of UNMIS, the UN peacekeeping operation overseeing the implementation of the Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), and authorised its deployment to Darfur to replace AMIS. GOS consent to UN peacekeepers proved difficult. Instead, on January 1st 2008, the "hybrid" United Nations-African Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), which was unanimously approved by UN Security Council Resolution 1769 in July 2007, took over from the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). UNAMID is expected to have 26,000 military, police and civilian personnel making it the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world. Estimates of those killed in Darfur range from 180,000 to 400,000; over 2 million people are living in displacement camps in Darfur and there are 200,000 refugees in Chad.

2.2 Summary of Oxfam's work on Darfur since 2003

Oxfam GB has had long-term development programmes in Darfur since the 1980s. In mid-2004 it launched a humanitarian response in Darfur, having suspended its development programme for security reasons.[2] With approximately 500 staff devoted to Darfur, it now works in all three states, supporting an estimated 400,000 conflict-affected people.[3]

Oxfam first developed an advocacy strategy on Darfur in December 2003, focusing on promoting humanitarian access to the region and urging a political solution to the crisis. While humanitarian access has remained a consistent focus throughout the crisis due to consistent bureaucratic impediments imposed by the GOS, encouraging assistance of a sufficient quality and quantity was added once humanitarian agencies were permitted into Darfur from May 2004. Once the Humanitarian Ceasefire was signed in 2004, Oxfam continued to press for a political resolution of the crisis throughout the protracted peace talks in Abuja from late 2004.[4] When the resulting 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement resulted in higher insecurity, Oxfam concentrated on calling for a strengthened comprehensive ceasefire by all parties to the conflict.[5] The third, and perhaps most intensive, area of advocacy activity for Oxfam has been the protection of civilians. Since early 2004, Oxfam has highlighted the need to protect civilians from violence and coercion and ensure that their rights are respected, in particular relating to freedom of movement. In 2004, the agency focused on ensuring that the African Union had the appropriate mandate and means to protect civilians. By 2005, Oxfam was calling for the reinforcement of the hard-pressed AU mission, which was struggling to protect civilians.[6] By mid-2005 the focus had shifted to the replacement of the African Union by UNMIS, with calls for renewed support for the African Union during the transition

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[2] Oxfam HECA, Sudan Timeline, 2008.
[3] Oxfam International, OI Advocacy Strategy: Chad-Darfur Humanitarian Crisis, February 2006.
[4] See for example, NGO Briefing to EU/NGO Roundtable, 26 January 2005, Brussels
[5] Oxfam GB (2007) A Strengthened Ceasefire in Darfur: A Priority for a Successful Road Map to Peace, internal briefing paper.
[6] Oxfam Darfur Policy and Advocacy Update, 23 April 2005.

phase. Oxfam also sought to influence the design, mandate and planning of the UNMIS-led intervention. In addition to this high-level work on protection, Oxfam has been active in-country on practical measures to promote civilian protection, including resisting the use of safe areas in Darfur, promoting a halt to forced returns and relocations and encouraging more effective patrolling by peacekeepers.

A consistent feature of the advocacy on Darfur has been intensive lobbying of key diplomatic and UN targets in Sudan, as well as in Europe and the US and at the UN Security Council. With increased recognition of the importance of regional and Chinese actors, this focus widened to include the African Union, Egypt and Libya, as well as popular mobilisation activities aimed at China. In terms of media work, after a cautious start and an initial focus on humanitarian access and response, Oxfam's activities expanded to include more sensitive issues, leading to the expulsion of the then Country Programme Manager (CPM).

The difficulties of attributable media on Darfur have forced a greater investment in attributable media; with some interesting results. Between February 2004 and mid-2004, advocacy was conducted mainly through the Sudan Advocacy Coalition, an in-country group involving CARE, Christian Aid, the International Rescue Committee, Oxfam GB, Save the Children UK and Tearfund. As the crisis escalated this no longer proved a fruitful mechanism and has since disbanded. In addition to ad hoc collective advocacy and media action in-country with CARE, International Rescue Committee and World Vision in particular, Oxfam has also supported and used the INGO Forum in Khartoum. In New York, Oxfam International (OI) has worked through an ad hoc Sudan Core Group of NGOs to encourage action by the UN Security Council. Since 2006, Oxfam has become more involved in global advocacy efforts, in particular through the Day-for-Darfur work coordinated by Crisis Action (see below).

In-country policy and advocacy capacity was first established in mid-2004, at the outset of the Darfur humanitarian response. A North Sudan/Darfur policy and advocacy adviser was appointed in Khartoum, along with a communications officer. Support was provided from the Campaigns and Policy Division (CPD) in Oxfam GB, along with regional advocacy and media support. Oxfam International in New York was also intensively engaged (at certain points taking up to 60% of the time of the head of office).

In 2007, the North Sudan/Darfur policy and advocacy advisory post was upgraded and expanded to cover all of Sudan, with a Darfur policy adviser who reports to this post. Since 2006, the Head of Advocacy in Oxfam GB has dedicated 20% of their time to Darfur in a project management capacity.

2.3 Key initiatives

2.3.1 Humanitarian access and humanitarian space

Oxfam's work in-country on humanitarian access and humanitarian space in Darfur was repeatedly highlighted by interviewees within and outside the agency as a key advocacy achievement. Certainly, it appears that Oxfam played a role in increasing awareness of the issue, influencing policy and arguably improving the situation in Darfur by facilitating greater humanitarian access.

Work on humanitarian access began in 2003, with coordinated international lobbying through the Sudan Advocacy Coalition. This was commended by a number of interviewees, and has been reinforced by external reviews.[7] The Sudanese authorities made a number of commitments to ensure humanitarian access in 2004, culminating in the signing of a Joint Communiqué between GOS and the UN on the occasion of the visit of the UN Secretary General late June 2004, which agreed a 'moratorium on restrictions' to humanitarian access in Darfur.[8] Whilst the advocacy campaign may have played a role in ensuring access, it must be remembered that access was only permitted once GOS air-strikes had eased, so it could be argued that international access was timed in accordance with the GOS' military campaign, rather than necessarily resulting from external pressure.

Oxfam continued to prioritise access in its advocacy work, and according to interviewees was a strong voice in promoting the annual renewal of

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[7] L. Minear, 'Lessons Learned: The Darfur Experience', in *ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action* (London: ODI, 2004).

[8] The Sudanese government first made a commitment to provide unrestricted humanitarian access under the terms of the Darfur Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement. At a Khartoum 'Consultation Mechanism on Darfur' meeting on 3 May 2004, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Mustafa Osman Ismail, indicated that humanitarian access and travel permits, along with humanitarian relief and the security situation, were his four priority concerns in relation to Darfur. The Joint Communiqué signed in June 2004 has been renewed annually.

the moratorium. However, by mid-2005 it was clear that the moratorium was not sufficient in the face of continued and systematic obstruction. Oxfam worked through the INGO Forum in Khartoum to ensure that humanitarian access was prioritised. Working with World Vision and later the IRC, it provided the policy support required to ensure sufficient field-based evidence to back up claims of access difficulties, providing policy briefs and talking points and ensuring INGO representation at key meetings. This work was credited by external audiences as one of the motivating factors behind the UN's push for a Joint Communiqué on humanitarian access, which was signed in March 2007. Oxfam, working with INGO partners in Khartoum, was involved in developing the terms of reference for the UN/donor/GOS/INGO High-level Oversight Committee, and ensuring INGO representation. The CPM was the chair of the Steering Committee of the INGO forum at the time, and as such was an obvious candidate to take on this representation role. Directly engaging with the authorities on a forum tasked with such sensitive matters was an unusual and somewhat contentious role for a CPM. The seniority of the-then CPM within Oxfam was said to have been the reason why Oxfam endorsed this approach. However, direct representation at such a senior level, coupled with strong policy support was felt to be particularly useful. A 'General Directory of Procedures' was developed, covering bureaucratic procedures and acting as a framework to monitor the government's performance. By 2007, the majority of humanitarian agencies were submitting information on government performance to OCHA, and the government had launched a training programme on the directory.

This work is credited with holding the GOS to account and improving humanitarian access generally and in particular for Oxfam GB. Having an agreed framework and a review mechanism was felt to be critical in increasing accountability, and such a model should be considered in other contexts where access is an issue. However, some interviewees were concerned about a lack of transparency from Oxfam as regards the conduct of the Oversight Committee, and the degree to which the concerns of other agencies were transmitted. In-country interviewees within Oxfam complained of a lack of international interest in 'operational' advocacy, and insufficient appreciation of the resources and energy involved.

Linked to the issue of humanitarian access is the question of the security of aid workers. As security

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Box 1: Benchmarks for Early Recovery

The benchmarks outlined below were agreed as the necessary pre-conditions before the recommencement of the DJAM in Darfur. They serve as a useful reference for future post-peace agreement recovery processes.

- Security on the ground. Indicators: effective cease-fire, cessation of hostilities, functioning monitoring mechanism;

- Possibility to hold inclusive consultations in Darfur. Indicators: a credible commitment to the political process that will give access to conflict-affected areas and enable Darfur-wide consultations with all parts of society, including non-signatories.

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worsened throughout 2005 and 2006, and direct targeting of humanitarian staff increased, Oxfam policy and communications staff in Khartoum were concerned that the issue was not being taken seriously enough at the UN. Oxfam's in-country capacity and international reach proved critical in pushing the issue up the policy agenda. Khartoum-based staff compiled a log of security incidents, and this was very useful in demonstrating the severity of the problem. A policy brief was distributed, which was used to inform an official UN note and, later, became part of a UN presidential statement on Darfur Meanwhile, key journalists were used to ensure consistent media coverage of the issue (this was not attributed to Oxfam). While interviewees could not point to any specific policy result from this work, it was believed that awareness of the issue at an international level increased, as did media attention.

2.3.2 Aid delivery – DJAM and early recovery
Oxfam has consistently advocated on issues related to the quality and quantity of aid in Darfur. In particular, during 2006 and 2007 Oxfam worked to ensure that the Darfur response did not move prematurely towards early recovery. There were concerns that, if recovery activities were started, the Sudanese authorities would argue that the situation had stabilised. There were also concerns that this might lead international donors to reduce humanitarian support. Following the signing of the DPA, a Darfur Joint Assessment Mission (DJAM) was undertaken to determine early recovery priorities. This process was later suspended once it became clear that it was not appropriate.

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However, international donors remained keen to see the start of early recovery activities, and a 'Darfur Peace and Stability Fund' was established. Acting as the INGO representative on the Khartoum-level 'Core Consultative Group', Oxfam was involved in negotiating the terms of reference for the Fund, including benchmarks setting out the conditions that would need to be in place in order to restart the DJAM process (see Box 1). One donor spoke of the lack of knowledge of humanitarian issues amongst the donor community and the critical role that Oxfam played in bringing this forward. Oxfam's programmes also benefited from this work. The first proposal to be funded was put forward by Oxfam, which was credited to the fact that Oxfam had been directly involved in the development of the terms of reference for the Fund.

Although Oxfam was effective in influencing donor policy and practice on the aid effort in Darfur, interviews with external actors in Sudan raised concerns about how Oxfam approached this work. In an effort to balance tasks within the INGO community, Oxfam withdrew its leadership role on the issue once the Fund was established and other INGO representatives took this role forward. Donor representatives spoke about how it then became clear that Oxfam's views did not necessarily represent a common perspective, or were not based on a thorough analysis, as the new INGO representatives were less emphatic about the timing for early recovery and discussions were held about the potential for starting early recovery initiatives in Darfur. When Oxfam re-engaged in the process, they raised concerns in both Khartoum and internationally about the change in donor approach to the issue. While the Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary General (DSRSG) recognised that the donor group had not been consistent with signed documents, concerns were raised that Oxfam's handling of the affair had undermined the effectiveness of previous advocacy efforts as well as damaging relations with diplomatic representatives and partner agencies. On balance, it appears that two issues undermined the success: first, there was a lack of genuine consultation by Oxfam with partner agencies on the issue, where acquiescence was accepted as agreement. Second, once Oxfam had taken on a leadership role, there was a lack of consistency in following up the issue.

2.3.3 Protection – peacekeeping
Oxfam strongly encouraged the deployment of a peacekeeping mission with the means and mandate to protect civilians in Darfur, first in relation to AMIS and later UNAMID. Indeed, some external interviewees spoke of Oxfam having developed almost military expertise in relation to the detailed work undertaken in this area, which included advocacy on mandate, the profile and numbers of troop deployed, logistics and resourcing. This level of technical involvement is unprecedented for an NGO and, while some external NGOs questioned whether it was appropriate[9], it represents an area of specialised expertise which can be drawn upon in the future. Here, coordinated work at various levels – in the field, in Khartoum, in Addis and in New York, London and Brussels – was particularly effective. In New York, OI provided specific text for use in Security Council resolutions, and brought a field perspective to Security Council deliberations. By developing constructive engagement with the African Union in Addis, Oxfam was able to gain access to the African Union funding grid for Darfur, which was used to support private lobbying about under-funding.

Oxfam also lobbied for patrols by AMIS/UNAMID peacekeepers to protect internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Darfur. Field protection officers facilitated dialogue between IDP groups and peacekeepers to assist in setting up the patrols. In Kalma camp in South Darfur, Oxfam worked with UNDP, the AU and the Women's Committee to draft Standard Operating Procedures for the patrols, including the timing of patrols, interpreters and action in the face of armed attack. Oxfam has lobbied the AU for more extensive patrolling, particularly in West Darfur. While the overall effect of this work is limited by the AU's lack of capacity, it was said to have had some localised impact in increasing patrols. This work was complemented by detailed information on the performance of the AU in regard to patrolling and other civilian-related dimensions of peacekeeping work. This was seen as particularly useful as it provided field-based evidence that would not otherwise have been available (see box 1). Once the deployment of UNAMID got underway, Oxfam, along with other INGOs worked to limit negative impacts of the force, including policy work on site locations of the peacekeepers, Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), civil-military guidelines and management of community expectations. Here, the fact that Oxfam GB had pre-existing guidelines on civil–military relations was said to have been very useful as they provided a strong platform for engaging on this issue with

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[9] The relevance and appropriateness of the prioritisation by Oxfam of protection of civilians and quality and quantity of aid as key strategies are beyond the scope of this paper.

the AU and OCHA, and a number of Oxfam's recommendations were accepted in the final draft on civil-military relations in Darfur developed by OCHA.

While work on the AU at a local, national and international level was praised, there was much disquiet about the level of Oxfam's engagement in the global advocacy effort calling for a transition to a UN peacekeeping mission. There was a sense that the focus on persuading the GOS to accept a UN–AU hybrid force was at the expense of issues relating to a cessation of hostilities and the political peace process. Furthermore, interviewees spoke of naivety within Oxfam as to who had influence on the eventual decision, with intensive lobbying at the UN, which had little or no power to decide whether the force would be deployed. However, Oxfam's work in ensuring a more moderate voice within the global advocacy campaign group was viewed positively, particularly the work undertaken to encourage the group to call for a political process as well as the deployment of UN peacekeepers.

2.3.4 Protection – forced relocations in Kalma
In October 2007, the GOS made clear its intention to dismantle Kalma Camp, one of the largest IDP camps in South Darfur. This would have resulted in the forced relocation of displaced persons and potentially set a dangerous precedent for other camps across Darfur. Oxfam, in partnership with other INGOs working in the camp, mobilised donors and UN agencies to halt the plan and prevent other forced relocations and returns. In particular, Oxfam drafted the talking points used by INGOs to speak out against the move, and also drafted and managed communications with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator. Oxfam called on the UN to take action to prevent forced relocation and

retaliatory action by the GOS against humanitarian agencies. This resulted in the production of internal guidance for UN agencies on forced relocations in Darfur. The US government and the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), Sir John Holmes, criticised the plan. Under scrutiny and unable to dismantle the camp, the GOS introduced a plan to forcefully disarm the camp, which may have resulted in violence towards civilians and forced relocation. The head of OCHA's South Darfur Office was expelled by the GOS as a result of his efforts to prevent forced relocations.

Oxfam's work on Kalma was highlighted by staff in Darfur and Khartoum as a positive example of coordinated action between different locations. It was also seen as a good example of the use of pressure at the UN to encourage action in the field. However, there were concerns over delays due to the insufficient engagement of policy staff early on in the process, and it was suggested that Oxfam failed to collect sufficiently detailed field information on threats of forcible return or relocation. Furthermore, as many staff were new or in transition, there was uncertainty over whether pressure ought to be applied in Khartoum or in New York. In the end, guided by OCHA contacts in New York, a letter was sent to the DSRSG in Khartoum at the same time as pressure was applied through New York. It was this combination that galvanised action in the UN, and the camp was neither dismantled nor forcibly disarmed. However, concerns were raised by some staff about the fact that 15,000 people were relocated to an unknown site, with little follow up by Oxfam or by other agencies; again highlighting the need for more consistent and longer-term engagement.

2.3.5 Prioritisation of issues
A number of interviewees raised concerns that the level of advocacy on Darfur was taking energy and resources away from other Sudan issues and from advocacy in other contexts. On the issue of the prioritisation of Darfur relative to other contexts, given the level of suffering, the regional implications of the crisis and the fact that Darfur represents a 'test case' for the international community on a number of different issues (AU involvement, UN coordination, responsibility to protection (R2P), civil–military relations), making Darfur a priority cannot be argued against. In terms of wider engagement in Sudan, a number of interviewees raised concerns that the unravelling of the CPA could also undermine any chance of peace in Darfur. These issues do not appear to be adequately addressed: for instance, Oxfam and many other agencies were silent at the time of the

third anniversary of the CPA. Whilst a Sudan-wide advocacy coordinator position has been created by Oxfam, the reality is that Darfur is an OI priority and so a large percentage of this position's work, as well as that of the CPM has been focusing either directly on Darfur, or on managing other policy/advocacy work on Darfur to the detriment of other work on Sudan. This lack of wider engagement recalls similarly narrow engagement on the CPA when the Darfur crisis erupted in 2003, and should raise alarm bells to ensure that this level of distraction it is not repeated, especially since Oxfam now has greater policy/advocacy capacity than in 2003/2004. Oxfam has also prioritised protection, which involves not only mitigating threats to civilians, but also seeking to prevent them in the first place.

2.4 Key tactics and tools

2.4.1 Coordinated action at different levels

While Oxfam has been unable to influence the crisis taken as a whole, its advocacy has paid dividends in terms of facilitating humanitarian access to an estimated 4 million people, as well as promoting local and international peacekeeping efforts. It is difficult to attribute this to any particular set of activities, as Oxfam's prioritisation of Darfur internationally has meant that an unprecedented level of resources, time, capacity and expertise has been brought to bear. Time and again, Oxfam's policy and advocacy capacity was emphasised by interviewees, with those external to the organisation highlighting that Oxfam was a 'go-to' agency due to its high level of analysis and information.

Thanks to its relatively large advocacy capacity, Oxfam had useful tools at its disposal at a country level, such as the AU monitoring tool and civil–military guidelines. The fact that Oxfam has a CPM and at least two policy/advocacy/communications staff has meant that it has greater facility for policy analysis, and can invest in developing and maintaining relationships at different levels. Many external actors looked with envy on the resources Oxfam could call upon. This capacity, backed up by an international network of lobbyists in the UK, Addis, Brussels, Cairo and New York, able to work in coordination and to provide information and bring additional pressure to bear at critical times, was particularly effective. Here, the availability of timely field information was of considerable importance. The involvement of the Head of Policy and Advocacy was thought to be particularly effective in guiding the strategic direction of the work, and ensuring that sufficient resources were devoted to it. What follows, while not capturing the entire body of work, nonetheless illustrates some of the key issues highlighted by interviewees.[10]

2.4.2 Working collectively
Joint NGO work
Given the sensitivity of advocacy in Sudan and the GOS' 'divide and rule' policy in its relations with international organisations, the importance of working collectively cannot be underestimated. In 2005, this became a key priority for Oxfam, and the Darfur policy adviser was 'offered' to the Khartoum-based INGO Forum as a resource. At the same time, Oxfam was elected to the Steering Committee of the group. In addition to the formal representational roles that Oxfam undertook in regard to the Joint Communiqué and the DJAM, Oxfam was involved in the development of ad hoc talking points, briefing papers and press releases, and was an active representative of the INGO community at UN and donor meetings. It also supported and coordinated INGO advocacy for strategic meetings, such as for the visit of ERC Holmes.

A number of interviewees felt that this was the only way to undertake effective advocacy in Khartoum. Through the work of Oxfam and other NGOs, the INGO Forum became a much more strategic grouping, with greater influence and impact on policy. A number of different sub-groups were established within the Forum, on humanitarian access and space, civilian protection and the role of the AU. Although the group became progressively more effective, there were tensions between Oxfam and other NGOs due to Oxfam's approach to collaboration (discussed below). Joint media statements on Darfur have been limited due to the sensitivity of press work, but where they have been issued they have been picked up by the media and have had impact. A joint NGO statement on humanitarian access to Darfur in 2006 was highlighted as raising awareness and increasing engagement on the issue by the Sudanese Humanitarian Affairs Commission (HAC), as well as by donors.

Despite positive experiences in working with others, country-level staff complained about a lack of appreciation within the agency for this work and

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[10] International work, particularly at the UN Security Council and through global advocacy campaigns, has not been given its full due as it did not emerge as strongly from what were mostly in-country or country-related interviews.

its usefulness in terms of achieving Oxfam's objectives. They also felt that it was not recognised that country-level meetings were often at a more senior level than at headquarters, but were not prioritised internationally. At the same time, however, it should be recognised by Oxfam that coordinated work does have serious time and capacity demands, especially as once embarked upon there should be consistent engagement. As such, while coordinated action should be prioritised, particularly in difficult environments, there is a need for sufficient capacity to support this work.

While partnerships with international organisations were deemed important, those with Sudanese organisations were not. According to Oxfam staff this simply was not a priority, and little or no resources were dedicated to it. Interviewees in Sudan spoke of international organisations 'crowding out' national actors, and complained that national organisations were frequently absent from meetings, and little support was offered from INGOs in supporting the achievement of advocacy objectives of national organisations. To some degree, this can be explained by the sensitivity of working on Darfur, where provision of information to and joint advocacy action with Sudanese groups may be considered too great a risk.

One exception to this is the work that Oxfam undertakes in supporting the Darfur Consortium, a non-operational grouping of African NGOs engaged in advocacy on Darfur. While no financial support has been provided, Oxfam exchanges information and provides in-kind support, such as office space. Oxfam staff felt that there was a lack of genuine partnership with these actors, and observed that, whilst some joint work was undertaken, this was joint in name only as Oxfam generally drove the agenda, and little time and few resources were set aside to build effective relationships.

International collective action

Since 2005, Oxfam has been increasingly engaged in international alliances. Crisis Action in the UK[11] serves as an umbrella organisation for humanitarian, human rights and policy organisations working on specific crises. Through Crisis Action organisations develop coordinated lobbying, mobilisation and media activities in a way that reduces the security implications for individual agencies. Through this group, Oxfam has developed closer working relationships and

more coordinated action with Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group and others. Joint work has been undertaken in the UK, Paris, Brussels and Addis. This work was emphasised by lobbyists in the UK and New York in particular, who praised the quality of the analysis and briefing papers being produced.

Following initial reticence, Oxfam has also become increasingly active in global activism on Darfur. The global campaign – the largest since the end of apartheid in 1991 – has succeeded in raising international awareness, in particular regarding China's failure to exert pressure on the Sudanese authorities. However, the bluntness of the campaign has raised concerns that the conflict is being over-simplified, the campaign exerted unhelpful pressure for an agreement that was ultimately ineffective, and undue attention was given to international peacekeeping. Through greater engagement, Oxfam has succeeded in moderating the messages of the Day-for Darfur campaign. Interviewees pointed to the analysis that Oxfam undertook on no-fly zones following advocacy by campaigning groups for their enforcement, which resulted in a change of mind on this issue. In April 2007, Oxfam's input into a press release ensured a shift in focus from the deployment of UN troops to additional discussion of the need for an accompanying political process.

2.4.3 Non-attributable media

Staff and journalists consistently highlighted Oxfam's work on non-attributable media as a success. Following public press work in 2004, which resulted in the expulsion of the then-CPM, Oxfam has had to be cautious about on-the-record media work. Oxfam had issued a series of ill-considered public statements calling for 'robust' action from the UN Security Council and the EU, which the GOS considered political and inflammatory in tone ('Only travel agents will gain from UN meeting'). Since then, most public work has focused on humanitarian assistance and Oxfam's programmes. However, non-attributable media activity has been highly creative.

Firstly, Oxfam has developed strong working relationships with a number of journalists concerned with Darfur. In addition to helping where possible with trips to the region, Oxfam has also provided background briefings on key issues. The level of trust that has been built up has meant that very sensitive information can be safely passed on. Oxfam has also coordinated media interviews with other actors, such as Human Rights Watch, where Oxfam presents the

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[11] See www.crisisaction.org.uk.

humanitarian situation and Human Rights Watch puts forward advocacy messages that Oxfam cannot air in public. Oxfam has also worked with newspapers in the US to ensure that op-eds on Darfur were printed to coincide with UN Security Council meetings.

Less traditional forms of media have also been explored. In July 2005, the then-media officer for Darfur started a blog called 'Sleepless in Sudan', an anonymous post describing everyday life for an aid worker in Darfur, including personal details of parties and sex, as well as more serious issues.[12] The objective was to disseminate information through the media without attribution to Oxfam.

The blog reached over 10,000 page views per month, several times more than the main Sudan page on Oxfam's website, with the highest number of visitors coming from key lobbying capitals (Washington DC, New York, and Brussels). There was also anecdotal evidence that Oxfam's lobby targets were reading it. More than 67,500 links were made to the blog from other websites (including influential online forums such as the Guardian, the New York Times, Global Voices and UN and World Bank links), and there were over 350 direct blog subscribers. Several journalists made interview and information requests, and articles about the blog appeared in key media targets (the *New York Times*, the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, a review in the *New York Review of Books* and editorials in regional US papers), with requests from broadcast media such as the BBC and US radio stations as well. More could have been done to exploit the opportunities for radio and TV interviews and the high level of interest from high-profile outlets like BBC World and NBC Dateline (a major US news show), but at the time senior managers judged this too risky, though several e-mail interviews were conducted. Finally, the blog generated correspondence from international figures, academic and research institutions, aid workers and AMIS troops.

2.4.4 Non-traditional targets
Darfur has presented a challenge to organisations engaged in advocacy in that it soon became clear that traditional targets in the UK, US and UN had only limited influence on the GOS. Some interviewees mentioned an initial lack of a coherent strategy for dealing with non-traditional targets, such as China, particularly given the

difficulties that advocacy on China would present for Oxfam's Hong Kong office. Oxfam has opened offices in Addis and Cairo in order to increase its influence with the African Union and Egypt, and the Middle East more broadly. While this has been widely welcomed as a positive move, it appears that Oxfam has much to learn about how to engage in non-Western environments. Campaigning and popular mobilisation activities were criticised as inappropriate and lacking in strategy and in analysis of power relationships; one particular source of criticism was a proposal to host a pop concert around the January 2008 AU Summit. In general, there is a concern that Oxfam is trying to transfer models and approaches applied and tested in the West which may be inappropriate elsewhere.

As part of a larger campaign strategy around influencing the UN General Assembly (GA), Oxfam organised a successful initiative in which eight female leaders visited camps in Chad, and afterwards conducted lobby meetings in Africa, Europe and the US. The 'Women Leaders' Trip', led by Mary Robinson, provided a platform for African advocacy on Darfur. Again, this was not branded by Oxfam, although the agency coordinated, supported and facilitated the trip. The initiative had a number of positive outcomes, with reports of unprecedented access to key targets and good media coverage.

As outlined in a thorough internal evaluation, there are generally applicable lessons from this initiative. First, large-scale initiatives like the women leaders' trip need far more resources from the media and policy teams in OGB early on. Second, Oxfam ought to be better at reporting back on outcomes and where evaluations exist, as in this instance, they should be shared broadly. This would help future activities through improving learning and possibly increasing support for continuing advocacy and campaign work, and would increase accountability. Oxfam also needs to be better at analysing objectives by consulting widely on strategies, particularly where they involve non-traditional actors and approaches. In the case of the women leaders' trip, despite the high level of access achieved, it is not clear how much influence was actually gained. This raises the question of how best to incorporate such activities within broader strategies aimed at influencing non-traditional targets in order to take advantage of the access achieved.

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[12] See http://sleeplessinsudan.blogspot.com.

3. Democratic Republic of Congo case study

3.1 Background

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)'s five-year war officially ended in 2003, but the country continues to experience one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Despite having their first elected president in over 40 years and living in a country which should be rich from its gold, diamonds and minerals, millions of Congolese still suffer from a lethal combination of disease and hunger caused by ongoing conflict and displacement. Since 1997, 4 million people have lost their lives, 450,000 Congolese have fled to neighbouring countries and over 1 million people remain displaced in the eastern provinces alone. The peacekeeping mission in the country (MONUC – United Nations Mission in the DRC) is the UN's largest, with nearly 17,000 troops and police and 2,700 civilian staff across the country. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has begun two investigations into war crimes.

Although a ceasefire was signed in 1999, intermittent fighting has continued to take a huge toll on civilians, with localised attacks, killings, rape and looting. Humanitarian access is constrained, particularly in the east. Violence around the elections and fighting between forces loyal to the elected president and his main rival caused many civilian deaths in Kinshasa and raised concerns for peace and stability in the west of the country as well.[13] Poverty is extreme and widespread. The security of women is of special concern, as widespread sexual and gender-based violence during the conflict has increased economic, social, cultural and political discrimination. Politicians, local leaders and neighbouring states exploit DRC's national resources and fund militias.

3.2 Summary of Oxfam's work on DRC since 2002

Oxfam has operated in the DRC since the 1960s. In eastern DRC, the organisation provides emergency assistance – including water, sanitation and public health – to over 300,000 displaced people. In recent years, Oxfam's humanitarian aid in the DRC has included public health work in the North Kivu refugee camps following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, an emergency response after the Nyaragongo eruption in 2002 and support to displaced people in Ituri.

Since 2005, advocacy has focused on protection and assistance. The first advocacy strategy, signed off by HACT in October 2005, prioritised the quantity and quality of aid, and called for demobilisation and reinsertion programmes for female ex-combatants. Messages sought to broaden international attention to include security section reform (SSR) and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). By October 2006, a second strategy focused on ensuring robust protection forces and mandates for MONUC and the European Union Force in the DRC (EUFOR), as well as renewing international interest in SSR and DDR. Oxfam pressed for the UN Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) to be at least 50% funded six months after its launch; developed policies on humanitarian reform; and sought to ensure the participation of national NGOs in humanitarian appeals. The strategy was updated in August 2007 to sharpen the emphasis on MONUC's mandate. This called for a continued Chapter VII mandate and for MONUC's benchmarks for drawdown to be tied to indicators reflecting the protection concerns of civilians. The result was a two-pronged approach, focusing on policy at the international level and on how MONUC was carrying out its mandate in-country.

The overarching tactic was to highlight the human cost of continued conflict in the public domain, while engaging in private lobbying over mandates. Oxfam also supported local advocacy and protection work in-country. Oxfam has devoted the majority of resources to research, international media work and popular mobilisation, with policy development informed by in-country participation in coordination and funding mechanisms. Briefing papers and support for high-level missions and meetings were developed to build relationships with key actors in the UN and in key capitals, while also establishing Oxfam as a credible voice on the DRC in the public domain. Popular mobilisation targeted constituencies in the United States and thematic campaigns. In-country advocacy staff represented Oxfam at the UN in New York, while resources were provided to address local and national priorities, in particular violations of IHL at checkpoints in North and South Kivu and joint military offensives. The DRC advocacy team has also been gathering information on developments on SSR, but this is under-resourced and on a small-scale.

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[13] Advocacy strategy, August 2007 update

In May 2005, the first policy and advocacy resource was established in Kinshasa, and a Humanitarian Advocacy Officer was based in Goma in 2006. Oxfam GB's Campaigns and Policy Division (CPD) also deployed an advocacy Humanitarian Support Professional (HSP)[14] to undertake a specific piece of work on humanitarian assistance in the DRC. Three further deployments of an HSP were later requested by the country team. A dedicated member of staff in the DRC team was employed in November 2007, with CPD helping to identify the necessary resources for the post and ultimately taking responsibility for the recruitment of a Humanitarian Assistance Policy Adviser.[15] Last to join the DRC team was the Humanitarian Reform Coordinator, DRC, an interagency position hosted by Oxfam tasked with coordinating humanitarian reform policy and advocacy among five NGOs. Thus, as of December 2007, Oxfam has five staff dedicated to advocacy on the DRC – a significant increase in human resources, reflecting the importance of the DRC in Oxfam International's humanitarian campaigns and the scaling up of OGB's programmes and advocacy.

3.3 Key initiatives

3.3.1 Raising international and national awareness of the quantity and quality of assistance

In March 2005, the UN labelled DRC the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. It was also a neglected one, with just 62% of the Humanitarian Action Plan funded.[16] Given this situation, and Oxfam's lack of policy and programme experience in protection in the DRC, a decision was made to prioritise advocacy on assistance. Interviewees outside Oxfam acknowledge the critical role Oxfam played in helping to bring international attention to the humanitarian crisis and to the funding shortfall. In February 2006, Oxfam produced a briefing note, *Meeting Real Needs: A Major Change for Donors to the Democratic Republic of Congo*,[17] and organised significant international media coverage.

For the most part, interviewees praised Oxfam for raising the profile of the crisis. Certainly, the media coverage that Oxfam generated enhanced its reputation and facilitated the agency's participation in discussions of assistance from which it had previously been excluded, both in Kinshasa and in capitals around the world. Oxfam was recognised in the 2007 HAP for its 'active appeal to raise awareness of the plight of the country'. The invitation of Oxfam International's Conflict and Humanitarian as the only NGO representative to attend a Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator (HC/RC) retreat was reportedly linked to Oxfam's perceived expertise on assistance, following Oxfam's policy work.

There were other benefits for the programme. HAP funding became easier to access, and levels increased in 2007. After a policy meeting in Kinshasa, one donor allocated $30,000 in funding to the programme in the belief that 'Oxfam would do something useful with it'. At the same time, some donors detected a lack of nuance in Oxfam's messages. Oxfam was criticising the donor community as a whole without acknowledging that funding from some countries had actually increased over the previous year. Donors also complained that the problem was not simply underfunding, since there was a severe lack of programme capacity in the DRC; including in Oxfam's programmes. This was cited as one reason for ECHO cancelling its contract with the agency at the time. Oxfam interviewees believed that the agency's ability to influence humanitarian assistance waned during 2007, with only ad hoc engagement with the HAP. Affiliates did not meet commitments and the in-country post dedicated to the Right to Assistance (R2A) was not funded and deployed until November 2007.

3.3.2 Humanitarian reform mechanisms

In 2006, DRC became a pilot country for humanitarian reform. At the start, humanitarian agencies were uncertain how to approach the issue. As a result, Oxfam deployed an advocacy HSP to the DRC to develop a report on the impact of reforms. The report, published in November 2006, was deemed by interviewees to have been useful in raising awareness and increasing engagement, providing clear information on the implementation of humanitarian reform mechanisms in the DRC.[18] The work was

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[14] Humanitarian Support Professionals are specialist staff employed on permanent contracts to respond to humanitarian crises. Oxfam GB maintains a pool of HSPs.

[15] DRC Timeline 2008.

[16] Oxfam press release, 'Rich Countries Must Fund Ballot Boxes and Bread as 42 Million Lives in Balance Ahead of Congo Donors Conference', 13 February 2006.

[17] *Meeting Real Needs: A Major Change for Donors to the Democratic Republic of Congo*, Oxfam Briefing Note, February 2006.

[18] Nicki Bennett, *Impact of Humanitarian Reform Mechanisms in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, November 2006.

undertaken in a low-key and open manner, and 'no one felt the need to receive it defensively'. The work provided a platform for broader discussion, and was used as a lobbying tool by Oxfam, other NGOs and donors.

John Holmes had just taken up his post as ERC, and Oxfam was told by OCHA that the report was one of the first pieces of work he read. The HC responded to the report in a four-page letter that referred to Oxfam's recommendations. For instance, in order to address bureaucratic problems around pooled funds, decision-making was centralised and reporting has become less onerous. Oxfam interviewees indicated that the Oxfam programme itself had benefited. Oxfam was also a credible voice in discussions of humanitarian reform. Interviewees highlighted how Oxfam's opinion was specifically solicited at high-level in-country meetings.

As the positive responses from UN mechanisms and donors increased, work around humanitarian reform mechanisms was further prioritised by the DRC advocacy team. Although this has had played a role in how humanitarian reform manifests itself in the DRC, as well as on Oxfam's profile and reputation, there were concerns that the emphasis of UN processes has little relevance at the level of communities. Oxfam has since employed a full-time position to work on humanitarian reform, which should free up resources for other advocacy activities.

3.3.3 MONUC's mandate and size
Despite the peace agreement and peacekeeping deployments, insecurity in the DRC persists. Oxfam has engaged in national and global advocacy to try to ensure the consistent implementation of protection mandates for peacekeepers and to ensure that political and military objectives do not jeopardise civilian protection. For example, military offensives targeting rebel factions may facilitate peace processes, but may also undermine the security of civilians. In addition, Oxfam has also sought to ensure that the ongoing protection needs of civilians are not overlooked or downplayed as the international community seeks to shift discussions into a post-conflict framework.

According to internal interviewees, Oxfam's reputation in the DRC has been transformed – in addition to leading the water and sanitation (WATSAN) cluster and remaining present while others pulled out, Oxfam is now considered an 'expert' NGO on protection. This is largely due to

its advocacy work. Oxfam is at the forefront of humanitarian advocacy, encouraging operational NGOs, OCHA, the HC and the UN system to take up their responsibilities. Working through the DRC Humanitarian Advocacy Group (HAG) and in the protection cluster, as well as in private lobby meetings, Oxfam participates in discussions and planning with key parties. In the weekly HAG meeting, Oxfam represents the wider INGO community and ensures that its concerns are raised. Oxfam has also been pressing for SSR as a way of addressing protection concerns, particularly the need for a professional national army (the Forces Armées de la Republic Democratic du Congo (FARDC) were directly responsible for 40% of all human rights violations reported to the UN's Human Rights Division in July–December 2006).[19] However, Oxfam's capacity to influence SSR has been undermined by a lack of resources for analysis and policy development.

MONUC's mandate for the protection of civilians
According to both Oxfam and external interviewees in New York, Oxfam has played a key role in ensuring that MONUC's protection mandate is on the agenda of the international community. Early on in Oxfam's advocacy, the emphasis was on ensuring effective implementation of the mandate. For example, MONUC/FARDC disarmament operations have led to considerable displacement, particularly in Ituri and North and South Kivu, and local communities have been targeted by militia in retaliatory attacks. In December 2005, MONUC was planning a joint operation against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) in Beni, an operation which Oxfam believed did not adequately take into account the immediate humanitarian consequences, in particular the likelihood of large-scale displacement. In a letter, Oxfam called for adequate safeguards to be put in place prior to any offensive. This letter, originally submitted through the Humanitarian Advocacy Group, was passed to the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guéhenno. The potential for joint military operations to have significant humanitarian consequences was acknowledged, and since then a process has been put in place whereby operations are discussed through the Humanitarian Advocacy Group, and are subject to obligatory internal assessments and

[19] MONUC Human Rights Division, *The Human Rights Situation in DR Congo During the Period of July to December 2006*, MONUC, February 2007, p. 13.

extra cost–benefit analysis which considers the humanitarian impacts. Oxfam's impact in this matter is clear: Guéhenno formulated a personal response to Barbara Stocking, and the original letter is known within MONUC as the 'Oxfam letter'. Again, this initiative is a useful template for future peacekeeping missions where offensives are likely to involve severe humanitarian consequences.

Oxfam's work, along with that of others, in the protection cluster has had some success in influencing policy and action. In March 2007, the MONUC Force Commander issued a detailed directive to his troops on the protection of civilians which required officers to attend protection cluster meetings. Where engagement with the protection cluster and open dialogue with humanitarian communities has been maintained, there have been tangible results. For instance, the Force Commander responded positively to a proposal for protection training for all new troops and MONUC has agreed to formal mechanisms to monitor and agree appropriate responses to civilian security concerns.

MONUC mandate renewal and benchmarks
To prevent a possible reduction in MONUC capacity, in February 2007 Oxfam produced a paper arguing for the renewal of the mission's mandate, entitled *A Fragile Future: Why Scaling Down MONUC Could Spell Disaster for the Congo*. It is clear that the report raised awareness among Security Council member states, especially those without in-depth knowledge of the DRC or MONUC. External Security Council 'watchers' claimed that targets either used the paper's language or directly referred to the paper in lobby meetings and Security Council negotiations. However, while Oxfam may have been successful in raising awareness of the need for consistent capacity, some external interviewees claim that the major galvanising force in ensuring that the force was retained was not international advocacy but the violence in Kinshasa in 2007.

Oxfam continued coordinated action in-country and at the international level to keep the spotlight on MONUC's protection of civilians (POC) mandate throughout the negotiations on the mandate renewal. In July 2007, the advocacy team in-country was informed in advance by OI in New York that an assessment mission from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was due to arrive in the DRC to discuss benchmarks for scaling down MONUC with the DRC government and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT).

Oxfam managed to reverse a decision not to engage with NGOs and in the ensuing meeting raised concerns about the benchmarks. Although it is unclear what impact this had, Oxfam was instrumental in ensuring that it was difficult for DPKO to ignore the protection concerns raised by humanitarian actors.

As negotiations around MONUC's mandate renewal were drawing to a close in December 2007, Oxfam lobbied representatives of the UNSC member states to improve the provisions for the protection of civilians. The quality of Oxfam's messages was clearly enhanced by the presence of the Goma-based Humanitarian Advocacy Officer, as well as collaboration with World Vision International representatives in high-level meetings. A number of interviewees commended Oxfam's work in New York in providing specific language to the Security Council in advance of Council resolutions. Oxfam's statements regarding the need for the army to respect IHL are reportedly used verbatim in UNSC Resolutions 1794 and 1804.

In conjunction with lobby meetings in New York, Oxfam devoted considerable resources to co-hosting with OCHA a photo exhibit on IDP camps in Goma. The goal was to show representatives of Security Council member states images of people and their stories about life in DRC, in the hope that, during subsequent conversations and negotiations, the crisis would no longer seem to involve strangers in a faraway place about which the diplomats had little direct experience. While this event solidified Oxfam's relationship with OCHA, it did not influence UNSC member states as many representatives did not attend. Nor did the event attract significant media coverage within the UN or the broader US and international arena. Both Oxfam and external interviewees considered the event well-coordinated and a useful means of relationship-building, but ultimately limited in terms of policy influence.

3.3.4 Addressing local protection concerns
Some of the most easily attributable impacts of Oxfam's advocacy involve local protection issues, where communities can feel the results immediately. Often, Oxfam collaborates with others through the protection cluster to identify problems and devise a response. For example, in South Kivu, one Congolese army commander was leading violations of IHL against civilians. After protests by the protection cluster, the perpetrator was removed and the security of the affected community immediately improved. However,

follow-up was ineffective as no resources were allocated to monitor the situation, to see, for example, whether the commander was brought to justice, or simply transferred to another location. In Beni, Oxfam identified specific areas where battalions were causing problems by working with communities in the health programme. Oxfam's public health promoter, who had a good working relationship with the local commander of the Congolese army, was able to influence where battalions were deployed. In areas where troops were removed, kidnaps and rapes immediately declined. While Oxfam's DRC country team recognises the significance of advocacy around local protection issues, the Policy and Advocacy lead has very little time to undertake this. There are demands on advocacy staff to respond to requests for information (what a number of internal respondents called 'feeding the beast') from other parts of the organisation, and to meet international advocacy priorities.

3.3.5 Supporting local advocacy efforts

Oxfam has sought to engage with local partners since 2006 (see Box 3 for an overview of the project aims). The aim is to help local partners reach national advocacy targets, thereby increasing the legitimacy of national actors and of Oxfam. In June 2006 and January 2007, OI convened two training sessions for 15 local partners and issued small grants ($1,700 per partner) to put towards advocacy on local protection issues. Although interviewees acknowledged that the initiative is a good idea, the collaboration did not meet its objectives. After a year, there was 'a lot of self-congratulation' and assumptions that the initiative was working, but partners could not demonstrate any additional capacity, nor could they say clearly how they were utilising the initiative. The main problem appears to be a lack of recognition an advocacy specialist would need programme management support for what is, essentially, a programme with advocacy content rather than an advocacy initiative.

Oxfam has not capitalised on the rich resource that local partners can be, both for Oxfam's advocacy and for civil society in the DRC. OGB's Humanitarian Advocacy Officer meets every week with 15 local NGOs in Goma. Although consistent engagement is a step in the right direction, there is a sense that the relationship mostly benefits Oxfam. In January 2008, when the OI DRC advocacy team met in Goma to decide on strategy for the upcoming year, DRC's local advocacy team

organised a parallel meeting of national partners. These consultative meetings operated separately until OI team members organised a learning session at the end.

3.4 Key tactics and tools

3.4.1 Evidence-based advocacy

Oxfam's investment in policy and research papers and briefs in the DRC has yielded significant gains in terms of credibility, profile and access to policy discussions and decision-makers in Kinshasa and at the UN in New York. Consistently, interviewees cited Oxfam's policy papers on the DRC as the primary tool of influence. Many interviewees outside Oxfam still use the papers to inform and lobby colleagues. There is a consensus that Oxfam's briefing papers are particularly useful because they are evidence-based, clearly written, factual and timely. The biggest added value stems from the fact that they are based on Oxfam's contact with beneficiaries, and presumably reflect beneficiary perspectives. As a result, situation statistics and policy prescriptions are accepted with less scepticism than the work of other advocacy organisations.

3.4.2 Coordinated approach from local to national to international

Interviewees repeatedly referred to the utility of relationship-building and information-sharing both in-country and at the UN in New York. Good coordination between the country office and international capitals have facilitated Oxfam's advocacy at both ends. The OI office in New York has successfully obtained information in advance of high-level missions to the DRC, as well as delivering briefing notes, facilitating in-country meetings and maintaining Oxfam's profile at UN headquarters. Oxfam is among the first to receive copies of draft texts of UN Security Council resolutions, and is able to influence the

process at an early stage. NGO colleagues in New York are keen to have Oxfam coordinate key messages as the agency is perceived to have close links with the British mission, in particular. Conversely, the credibility of Oxfam in New York depends upon input from the in-country team, whose inputs prior to meetings are relied on heavily and visits from field staff are highly regarded. External interviewees believe that 'Oxfam is right to prioritise resourcing the New York office. [It is a] privileged position to have individuals full-time in discussions that are going on at the UN and in New York, rather than lobbing in policy papers and hoping that someone reads them.' The work undertaken in maintaining relationships has been critical to Oxfam's ability to exert influence. Without these relationships, Oxfam would not be able to 'get at stuff going on behind closed doors'. However, Oxfam's access is limited as like other organisations it is currently having difficulty gaining access to MONUC discussions on stabilisation.

3.4.3 Support from Oxford

Another important tool in DRC's work has been consistent support from CPD in Oxford which has helped the programme in two ways. First, Oxfam GB has supported four deployments of advocacy humanitarian support personnel in order to provide policy and lobbying support in-country at critical times. This injection of capacity has allowed Oxfam to develop policy papers on humanitarian reform, as well as undertake significant lobbying at national and international levels which would not otherwise have been possible. Additional capacity was also provided in order to provide on-the-job mentoring of a new policy and advocacy coordinator (see section 6.4.2 below). In addition to providing these significant capacity boosts, a number of interviewees mentioned CPD's pro-activity in identifying advocacy and lobbying opportunities and in ensuring timely and relevant lobbying products, such as letters and talking points, for key meetings.

4. Uganda case study

4.1 Background

President Yoweri Museveni took power in 1986, following decades of authoritarian rule. Subsequent reforms enhanced stability, peace and prosperity, giving Uganda a reputation as an African success story. Behind this image, however, marginalised populations in the north and north-east of the country have suffered terribly since Museveni came to power. Rebel groups have waged a series of campaigns against the Government of Uganda (GOU) in Acholiland. Of these, Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is the most notorious and enduring. In 2002, the Ugandan army launched a large-scale military campaign (Operation Iron Fist) with the objective of ending the war. The LRA responded by escalating its campaign of massacres, abductions and attacks on humanitarian organisations, and fighting spread to new areas of the north and north-east. The effects were devastating. In some areas of the north, 90% of the civilian population were displaced. At the height of the conflict, approximately 40,000 children 'commuted' in search of safety each night, and estimates suggest that at least one in three young men and one in six young women from the region have at some point suffered abduction.

A convergence of factors – including the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan[20], increased international engagement including through the International Criminal Court (ICC) and growing recognition that a military victory could not be achieved – established a platform for peace negotiations, which began in June 2006. The signature of the 2006 cessation of hostilities prompted large-scale return from northern Uganda's displacement camps, with more than half the estimated 1.8million displaced moving out of camps in the first year to either return to, or close to, their places of origin. With rule of law and basic services both limited, their situation remains precarious and is further threatened by the difficulties and delays that have beset the peace talks. Linked in part to the arrest warrants for LRA leaders issued by the ICC, and despite the

agreement of the constituent parts of a Final Peace Agreement, the LRA leadership did sign the final treaty in April 2008. At the time of writing, the Chief Mediator of the talks was still trying to encourage signature in a context of growing military activity.

Meanwhile in the country's northeast region, Karamoja, where approximately 80% of people are estimated to live below the poverty line, ongoing disarmament operations by the Uganda People's Defence Force pose serious threats to civilians' human rights. This, coupled with a lack of political, economic and social development in the region, jeopardises the protection and livelihoods of the area's mainly pastoralist communities.

4.2 Summary of Oxfam's work on Uganda since 2002[21]

Oxfam's Uganda programme has a long history of policy and advocacy work on longer-term issues such as debt and land. Engagement on humanitarian issues was prompted by the resurgence of fighting in northern Uganda in late 2002. Meetings between international and national organisations involved in the region led to the formation of a loose coalition of civil society actors in order to support a 'just and lasting peace in Northern Uganda'. The coalition – known as Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU) – conducts and supports advocacy at national and international levels through research, analysis, discussion and policy advice.[22] According to Oxfam representatives, 'it was very hard to disaggregate between Oxfam's and CSOPNU's objectives; pretty quickly there was no distinction'. Initially, the work of the coalition was nationally-oriented, promoting a campaign of national reconciliation in Uganda so that the plight of the Acholi people would come to be understood as relevant to all Ugandans, rather than dismissed as a regional issue. In this regard, the group aimed to demonstrate how conflict in one part of the country was affecting the overall economy. It also aimed to raise international awareness of the need

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[20] Both parties to Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement have played a role in financing and supporting both sides in Northern Uganda's war. The signing of Sudan's CPA is believed to have lead to a reduction in the level of financial and military support that the GOS reportedly provided to the LRA, thus reducing the LRA's military capability.

[21] This review focuses on Oxfam's role within CSOPNU and the overall work of CSOPNU, because this featured more heavily in interviews, and because it offers a useful model for learning.

[22] CARE, 'Supporting Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda', Proposal to DFID Uganda from CARE Uganda on behalf of the CSOPNU coalition, 2003.

to replace military action with political dialogue, as well as more effective engagement with the protection and humanitarian crisis in the region.

Given the lack of balanced and objective information on the situation in northern Uganda, CSOPNU sought to develop in-depth reports on specific issues, which it used as the basis for lobbying activities and for galvanising national media attention. In 2003, the group engaged in national consultative processes, and in mid-2004 it decided to complement this national work with international advocacy. Drawing heavily on Oxfam's campaigning and media capacity, as well as its access through OI to the UN Security Council, CSOPNU lobbied the Security Council and arranged celebrity visits. By 2005, the group was also engaging with issues around the ICC. In 2006, CSOPNU published its most contentious of a series of reports – *The Cost of Conflict* – which significantly increased international awareness. It also prompted severe criticism from the GOU.

In 2006, internal factors relating to differences over the ICC, the repercussions of the *Cost of Conflict* report, progress in the peace talks and increased international engagement prompted the CSOPNU to change direction. Although Oxfam and other international NGOs remain involved, the agenda is now driven more by national organisations, with a greater focus on longer-term issues. Oxfam now undertakes more individual, rather than collective, advocacy, and since 2007 has focused on highlighting protection and humanitarian issues in Karamoja, as well as reducing the violence associated with disarmament exercises in the region.

A resurgence of fighting in Northern Uganda precipitated an Oxfam programme scale-up in the north in late 2002. In recognition of the inadequacy of dealing solely with the consequences of the crisis, when a new humanitarian coordinator was appointed as part of the scale-up, advocacy was a major part of his remit. By 2003, a dedicated Oxfam GB policy/advocacy coordinator position was developed and this position continues to today. Before the peace talks commenced, the CPM was contributing between 40% and 70% of their time to advocacy but this was eased somewhat with the appointment of a CSOPNU coordinator late 2003.

4.3 Key initiatives

4.3.1 Raising awareness of the need for a political solution

There is no doubt that major progress has been made in the last six years in bringing about a political resolution of the crisis in northern Uganda. How much of this can be ascribed to the work of CSOPNU is less certain. Interviewees spoke of CSOPNU being an 'important voice' in shifting the focus from military to political action. While it is impossible to measure the exact level of impact, Oxfam's work with CSOPNU does appear to have played a role both nationally and internationally in galvanising action and reinforcing efforts towards political dialogue.

One of the aims of CSOPNU's advocacy was to promote understanding of the extent to which the problems in northern Uganda were damaging the whole country. Unlike much of the advocacy undertaken by international organisations, CSOPNU focused on directly changing attitudes within the Ugandan public and government, as well as encouraging international governments to apply pressure. The group's first report, *The Economic Cost of the Conflict* of 2002, aimed to challenge prevailing national and international attitudes that the war could be won militarily. As Museveni's reputation was linked to Uganda's economic success, the report highlighted that the conflict was costing approximately 3% of GDP, or $100 million annually.[23]

A key turning-point was a Consultative Group meeting in Kampala in early in 2003, hosted by the World Bank and involving government ministers and international donors. Respondents repeatedly identified this meeting as critical in raising awareness among national and international actors on the need for political dialogue. The Ugandan Chair of CSOPNU delivered a presentation in response to a paper submitted to the conference by the Prime Minister. The presentation rejected the assertion of the Prime Minister's paper that the crisis in northern Uganda could be resolved by military means:

> We understand the notion of a 'military solution' to mean the physical eradication of the Lord's Resistance Army. To argue that this is possible ignores the reality. Attempts to pursue

[23] CSOPNU *Counting the Cost of Conflict in Northern Uganda* (2006)

an end to the conflict through these means have so far failed. In the latest phase of the conflict, more people have been abducted than rescued. We believe that, unlike the paper's assertion, Operation Iron Fist has failed.[24]

This was apparently the first major public meeting to reject Operation Iron Fist, the GOU's military campaign in the north. The impact of the presentation – which apparently drew shocked responses from government ministers present at the meeting – was enhanced as it was delivered by a Ugandan woman and not an international. A large amount of national media activity followed, including paying for policy papers to be published in the national press challenging the neglect of the north and asking: 'Is Uganda one country?'. CSOPNU also targeted the international community which in 2002/2003 largely left unchallenged the military solution that the GOU was employing and largely ignored its humanitarian consequences. CSOPNU used the reach that a coalition offers to target different diplomatic missions, with Oxfam and Save the Children lobbying the UK, and NRC the Scandinavians, for example.

The first official sign that CSOPNU's work was gaining traction came in 2004, when the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for Uganda quoted statistics from the *Cost of Conflict* report. Interviewees also pointed to more specific examples of change. For example, one EU diplomatic representative who had publicly stated that militarily stopping the LRA was the only solution apparently changed his view following CSOPNU's interventions. When an EU Commissioner visited Uganda in 2003, he publicly condemned the situation in the north.

By 2005, Oxfam International and Oxfam America were playing a leading role in pushing Uganda up the agenda within the Security Council and in Washington. Oxfam's CPM visited the US a number of times to lobby the US government and the Security Council on behalf of CSOPNU. One of the most significant of these trips took place in early 2006, when the CPM represented CSOPNU at the UN Security Council Arria Briefing in New York. The Canadian Ambassador to the Security Council, who by then had become an important champion

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Box 4: Building Blocks for Peace: summary of key messages

Improve security by:
• Remaining committed to the peaceful solution of the conflict and adhere to the cessation of hostilities agreement
• Improving the performance of the security sector to reduce incidents of sexual violence, the use of disproportionate force, and theft by security forces through a number of SSR activities
Engage communities affected by the conflict in the peace and development processes by:
• Investing in consultation of a cross-section of IDPs, including women, vulnerable groups and LRA returnees including through the use of accessible media
• Increasing development of alternative justice mechanisms that satisfy the expectations of the communities and meet international standards for accountability and justice recognising that peace is the overriding concern of affected communities
• Prioritising the reintegration of ex-combatants through well-devised and funded programmes

Support sustainable voluntary return and viable livelihoods by:
• Increasing freedom of movement through reducing restrictions on movement and ensuring no pressure is exerted on IDPs to move
• Providing greater information to IDPs on the security situation in their homes and stepping up mine clearance
• Providing targeted assistance to vulnerable groups such as support for building shelter, creating alternative livelihoods, and protecting land rights.

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of UN action on northern Uganda, hosted a less formal breakfast meeting, where Oxfam presented its advocacy positions. Despite public anger from the GOU, the Tanzanian Ambassador to the UN publicly criticised GOU policy, and the UN Security Council included northern Uganda in Resolution 1653, the first time that Uganda had been referred to in a UN Security Council resolution on regional conflict.

More recently, Oxfam has undertaken research outside CSOPNU on community perspectives in northern Uganda, using quantitative surveys as well as focus group discussions.[25] The issue of

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[24] CSOPNU, 'Towards a Just and Lasting Peace in Northern Uganda', Statement by CSOPNU at Consultative Group meeting, Kampala, 15 May 2003.

[25] The paper was based on the findings of a quantitative survey of 600 IDPs in 11 camps in the districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader, as well as focus group discussions

how Oxfam engages in political processes once they get underway was repeatedly highlighted in interviews as a fraught issue for the agency. While in this case, the impact of the survey was undermined by the fact it was quite late and other organisations were undertaking similar work, the 'Building Blocks for Peace survey offers a potential model (see Box 4) offers a potential model for the organisation, as it uses community perspectives on peace as platform for reinforcing the need for political dialogue as well as engaging in different elements of a peace process. It also allows engagement on the implementation of peace once the peace agreement is signed as there can be regular updates on communities' experiences of key security and livelihood issues over time.

4.3.2 Raising international awareness of humanitarian assistance

Despite the escalation in violence in the north, the humanitarian response was initially limited and there was a general perception that Uganda was solely a developmental context. Most reports credit the then-ERC, Jan Egeland, with changing this view with his comments in late 2003 that northern Uganda was the 'world's largest neglected crisis'.[26]

CSOPNU worked hard to ensure that the seriousness of the situation in the north was emphasised during Egeland's visit, and highlighted the need for increased aid. Interviewees also pointed to the extensive lobbying undertaken in Uganda as well as internationally, which served to reinforce this message. It appears that CSOPNU's reports on protection and land[27] in particular influenced the type of response in northern Uganda. These reports were repeatedly cited in interviews as 'key references' or 'seminal works', and interviewees noted that visiting aid delegations quoted from them. Since then, protection has become a central plank of the humanitarian response in the north, and is a priority activity for many of the agencies working there. While CSOPNU appears to have had

some success in increasing awareness of the humanitarian situation, efforts to bring about more detailed policy change appear to have been less successful, according to interviewees. Overall, it appears that CSOPNU's reports highlighted the broad need for engagement, rather than guiding specific responses.

4.3.3 The ICC

In 2004, the Ugandan government was the first state to refer a crisis to the ICC. This raised a number of concerns for humanitarian organisations: only the actions of the LRA would be investigated and the threat of international prosecution would undermine peace efforts, prolong the conflict by reducing the LRA's incentive to negotiate and make displaced northern Ugandans still more vulnerable to LRA attacks.

There were major differences of opinion between CSOPNU members on the issue of the ICC. Whilst many local representatives of international organisations were against ICC prosecutions for the reasons cited above, staff at headquarters advocated in favour of the ICC as an international mechanism to combat impunity. Local organisations, on the other hand, were very much against the ICC's engagement in the northern Uganda and pushed strongly for CSOPNU to take a public line on this issue. In the end, the main thrust of CSOPNU's advocacy argued for a delay in issuing arrest warrants so that peace talks could be held without the threat of prosecution, as well as calling for greater consultation by the ICC with affected communities in northern Uganda. The lack of consensus on the ICC was repeatedly mentioned in interviews as one of the factors leading to the breakdown in working relations within CSOPNU (see below).

Oxfam played a strong role in CSOPNU's advocacy on the ICC, including representing CSOPNU in meetings with the ICC Chief Prosecutor in New York in 2004, and speaking out against the ICC at a public debate at the American University College of Law in Washington DC and at meetings in Uganda. Interviewees in the ICC claim that, while the work of civil society in general played a role in how the ICC operated in Uganda (including adopting a lower profile in its investigations and consulting communities), it did not influence its overall objectives or the timing of the prosecutions, as the ICC as an international judicial mechanism cannot be flexible on these issues. While the importance of the ICC to peace and justice in Uganda meant that this was an

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involving 91 IDPs and interviews with camp leaders and local government representatives in eight camps in the same districts. See Oxfam, 'The Building Blocks of Sustainable Peace: The Views of Internally Displaced People in Northern Uganda', 2007.

[26] United Nations News Centre, 'UN Relief Official Spotlights World's Largest Neglected Crisis in Northern Uganda', 21 October 2004, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=122 97&Cr=uganda&Cr1.

[27] CSOPNU, *Land Matters in Displacement*, 2004, and CSOPNU, *Nowhere to Hide*, 2004.

issue which Oxfam could not ignore, trying to change what the ICC did, rather than how it did it, is a questionable tactic, particularly given Oxfam's global support for the ICC.

4.3.4 Raising awareness of the marginalisation of the Karamojan

Oxfam's 2007 strategy included for the first time challenging GOU restrictions on nomadic pastoralism in Karamoja, a sub-region in the north-east of the country, as well its military efforts to secure the region. Following the publication of the controversial *Cost of Conflict* report (see below), the approach has largely involved behind-the-scenes lobbying and non-attributable media work. While this work has not had the same profile as some of Oxfam's earlier efforts, interviewees mentioned some positive outcomes at a local level. In particular, highlighting the negative implications of the GOU disarmament exercises in the region, including facilitating dialogue between communities and the military, has been praised for reducing local conflict. In addition, more practical interventions, such as providing the military with megaphones so that they could announce their arrival in a village orally rather than by firing their guns, have been commended.

4.4 Key methods/approaches

4.4.1 Evidence-based advocacy

Oxfam and CSOPNU have utilised an impressive array of advocacy tools and approaches.[28] However, the central pillar of CSOPNU's work has been the use of evidence-based advocacy. This was a conscious decision, taken not only to address the information deficit in relation to northern Uganda, but also to ensure that sufficiently robust evidence was available to back up the challenging assertions that the Coalition was presenting. In the words of one interviewee, if CSOPNU was going to change opinions 'it was not enough just to say it, you had to prove it'. The overall approach was for one member to lead on the commissioning or development of a paper. Drafts were submitted for comments and then later endorsed by the Coalition. Once a final paper was available, media events and advocacy were organised. Given the context, and the risks involved in presenting opinion rather than fact, this was both a strategic and successful approach

to advocacy. As became evident, the success of this approach was undermined somewhat by its implementation.

CSOPNU has published eight reports in total.[29] In 2007, Oxfam also published a report independently, *Building Blocks of Peace*, discussed above. The more successful reports have tended to be those that served both an information and advocacy purpose, in particular the 2002 paper *The Economic Cost of the Conflict*, led by CARE[30], which for the first time put a figure on the cost of the war, and *Nowhere to Hide*, written by an Oxfam employee, which highlighted the human consequences of the conflict. Both reports offered a balanced view of the conflict, but were also sufficiently newsworthy that they had media and advocacy potential. Both succeeded in raising awareness and promoting engagement.

However, a number of interviewees raised concerns about the effort involved in developing and agreeing reports, relative to the limited work that followed on dissemination and advocacy. They felt that there was insufficient recognition of the amount of time involved in developing research in a coordinated way, affecting the timeliness of the reports. In addition, while Oxfam was praised for the work of its media department in assisting in launches of the reports, it was felt that more could have been done to develop a strategy for their dissemination and use. This concern appears justified in relation to the *Nowhere to Hide* paper. While repeatedly praised for its quality, the report arguably exceeds what is required in an advocacy paper (it runs to 126 pages, and took over 12 months to produce), whilst being insufficiently detailed to serve as a programme document (and was not designed for that purpose). Dissemination

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[28] Including face-to-face lobbying in-country and internationally, on- and off-the-record media work, celebrity visits (actor Helen Mirren), UN Security Council Arria briefings.

[29] *Continuing Conflict in Acholiland: An Objective Civil Society Organisation Perspective* (2002); *The Economic Cost of the Conflict* (2002); *Land Matters in Displacement* (December 2004); *Nowhere To Hide* (December 2004); *Perceptions of Ugandans on National Identity* (2005); *Counting the Cost of Conflict in Northern Uganda* (2006). *CSOPNU Agenda III Consultation Report (2007)* and *The Impact of Armed conflict on Children in Northern Uganda* (2007). A report entitled *The Drivers of Conflict* was not published due to concerns about its sensitivity. See www.csopnu.net

[30] Two 'Cost of Conflict' reports have been undertaken by CSOPNU. The 2002 'The Economic Cost of the Conflict' was lead by CARE, whilst the 2006 'Counting the Cost of Conflict in Northern Uganda' was written by Oxfam.

was apparently limited to a public launch in Gulu, which gained some media attention, and posting on the web, but according to interviewees Oxfam and CSOPNU could have utilised the report more in face-to-face briefings on the specific issues it outlined. This is a common limitation in the use of evidence in advocacy, and suggests that, while the overall approach is successful, particularly in contexts where information is in short supply, more can be done to support reports with a clear strategy for communication. In general, the balance of effort should favour advocacy, rather than the development of the report.

The 2006 *Counting the Cost of Conflict* was developed differently. This report was aimed at revisiting the economic implications of the conflict. It was produced in a month, and was based on a review of available literature. Once again, the paper was written by an Oxfam employee, and again the quality was strong. Running to 40 pages, the paper was more suited to advocacy purposes. One reason why the paper took less time to produce was that it was developed solely by Oxfam, rather than through CSOPNU, and there was little consultation. Two days were allowed for comments, which was insufficient given the sensitivity of the information involved. At the specific request of Oxfam's media department, the paper included a comparison between mortality rates in northern Uganda and rates in Iraq and Darfur. These comparisons were emphasised in the press releases accompanying the report, which claimed: 'Rate of death in northern Uganda is three times higher than Iraq: new report'. This had the desired effect in terms of generating international media coverage, but was a misrepresentation as the rates cited related to the height of the conflict, not the situation as it currently obtained.

The GOU reacted strongly, publishing information in the national press showing that the economic situation in Uganda had improved. For the first time in CSOPNU's history, Museveni requested a meeting, which he used to warn members not to engage in 'political' activities. The intimidation that ensued led to a dramatic reduction in public advocacy by CSOPNU and Oxfam. Many interviewees claimed *Counting the Cost* was successful in advocacy terms, in that it put pressure on both the government and the international community. Days after its publication, the GOU issued policies relating to the north, including a humanitarian plan.

Diplomatic missions felt that the paper was useful in internal advocacy.

This success came at a price, however, with many in CSOPNU claiming that the report damaged relations within the Coalition, and there were complaints that Oxfam had allowed insufficient time for consultation. It seems that Oxfam had shifted strategy in raising the level of pressure on the government and embarking on media-driven advocacy. While this may have been necessary, and appears to have had some success, this approach was undermined by a lack of rigour in the research and media activities. More importantly, its outcome was affected by a lack of recognition and planning within Oxfam on potential repercussions and a lack of genuine consultation on this issue with CSOPNU. This lack of planning within Oxfam also meant that the success of the advocacy was not capitalised upon, as Oxfam and CSOPNU curtailed its advocacy and in particular, public media work after the release of the report.

4.4.2 Working in a coalition
CSOPNU was praised by interviewees within and outside Oxfam as a working model that should be replicated elsewhere. Key to its success was the fact that it grew organically and was nationally driven. When it emerged, in the early 2000s, there was very little discussion of and action on the causes of conflict in Uganda; most international organisations were working only on the consequences, while national organisations were limited in their advocacy by capacity constraints and concerns about exposure. Advocacy was sensitive and no organisation, including Oxfam, was willing to undertake major advocacy efforts alone. That said, there were strong and outspoken national organisations, as well as a set of dynamic internationals with the personal commitment and trust to ensure that organisational interests were secondary to the need to effect change. Also important was CSOPNU's flexibility. Although a network of up to 50 organisations, each contributed in accordance with their capacity. At the same time, there was clarity on the overall objective of the Coalition (evidence-based advocacy on peace), underpinned by a clear memorandum of understanding and working procedures (including signing off). This was supported by an active Steering Committee and annual meetings, which agreed overall objectives. CSOPNU also created a branding (from Microsoft artwork) and a tagline ('a just and lasting peace'), which helped give the group external coherence. Having funding available was also thought to be

critical, but there were differing views on the importance of a Secretariat. Many felt that having a staff member to coordinate the group reduced the level of commitment of individual organisations.

Oxfam was commended for the dynamism, capacity and expertise that it brought to the group. In many ways, Oxfam, along with three or four other national and international actors on the Steering Committee, drove the group's success, providing leadership and capacity. Oxfam had skills and capacities that were unique in the group – it knew how to develop policy briefs, press releases and talking points. It had media access unlike no other organisation, and it had unparalleled access to the Security Council in New York. Within Oxfam, there was a strong feeling that CSOPNU was successful because Uganda was not a priority country for the agency. As such, the country programme had a level of dynamism, flexibility and autonomy which meant that it could genuinely commit to the principles of partnership in a coalition. Within the Uganda country programme there was a set of experienced and skilled (international) individuals, in particular the CPM, who were committed to advocacy. Advocacy was embedded in programmes, with policy/advocacy staff reporting to programme coordinators.

This unusual set of factors meant that Oxfam contributed heavily to CSOPNU, and the additional transaction costs (in time, capacity and compromise) that always accompany collective action were felt to be worth the increased impact and decreased risk, although this was not always appreciated within the wider organisation. Given that CSOPNU was challenging prevailing attitudes, the number of organisations involved reinforced the message. In particular, CSOPNU had more weight and access nationally due to its national membership, and changing national perspectives was a central objective. The range of international members also increased Oxfam's access to other diplomatic missions.

Concerns were raised about Oxfam's participation in collective action. National organisations in particular spoke about a lack of consultation and genuine participation. Especially once the broader organisation 'woke up' to Uganda, Oxfam was viewed as a difficult organisation to work with. Many spoke of Oxfam producing letters or briefs and simply asking the group to agree them, rather than offering opportunities to modify them. A former CPM spoke of having to 'manipulate' the Oxfam system to enable proper participation, including ignoring onerous sign-off procedures. Some mentioned that Oxfam drove the agenda and set the pace too much, and pointed to the *Counting the Cost* report as an example of Oxfam ignoring agreed procedures and imposing its agenda on others. While efforts were made to address the imbalance between national and international organisations, as well as the relative weight of Oxfam (through ensuring a balance in the Steering Committee and a Ugandan Chair, in particular), this issue was never fully resolved.

CSOPNU has changed over the past two or three years, in part because the peace process has got under way. At the same time, the repercussions of the *Cost of Conflict* report reduced trust within the group and it lost some momentum. The group is now very much led by national, rather than international, organisations, and Oxfam now undertakes a greater proportion of its advocacy alone. While there are no easy answers to the problem of how Oxfam should engage in national-level consortia, the CSOPNU model demonstrates that, when the right conditions exist at a country level, country offices should be offered both the support and the space to engage. However, the potential asymmetry resulting from Oxfam's involvement should be recognised up-front, with principles and procedures to help address this. Oxfam should consider complementing its involvement with some capacity-building work on advocacy, and should also clearly indicate when it is reducing its participation.

5. How effective are Oxfam's advocacy efforts in influencing change?

The figure below provides a simple representation of the policy influence process. The preceding studies suggest that Oxfam's work on Darfur, DRC and Uganda played a role in raising both public and political awareness of key issues relating to the humanitarian situation in each context, and influencing the policy of international institutions. Examples range from raising awareness of the crisis in Darfur and the need for humanitarian access, to maintaining engagement in protection of civilians in DRC and highlighting the cost of the military response to the conflict in northern Uganda.

It is difficult to directly attribute a specific piece of work by Oxfam to a specific decision, especially within the confines of a desk-based review, but external actors working in-country mentioned time and again how important Oxfam's analysis was, how influential the organisation is and how the direct engagement of lobbyists and policy advisers had influenced the direction of policy. Evidence of such impact is clear from Oxfam's work on bureaucratic impediments in Darfur; work on the quantity of aid to DRC, as well as changing international perspectives on the response to the conflict in northern Uganda.

Assessing impact on people's lives of a change in policy or practice is more challenging still. It is much easier to demonstrate impact from in-country work, and it is clear that Oxfam's work has, for instance, mitigated the impact of disarmament in Karamoja and helped to protect people in Darfur by facilitating increased patrols by peacekeepers. Oxfam's policy work with international bodies such as the African Union and Security Council is more difficult to calibrate. There is no doubt that Oxfam played a role in some decisions and policies, particularly in the Security Council. However, the degree to which these policies are implemented is less certain, and whether they then result in positive impacts for people on the ground is very difficult to discern, particularly over short timeframes. Questions of local impact are also subject to differing views on the relative importance of international processes for the lives of conflict affected people. However, it is probably safe to assume that Oxfam along with a myriad of other actors and factors has played a part in the increased security that northern Uganda is experiencing. Similarly, the increased assistance to the DRC, as well as MONUC's protection role both of which Oxfam has encouraged, has enhanced the wellbeing of communities there.

Policy and advocacy activities
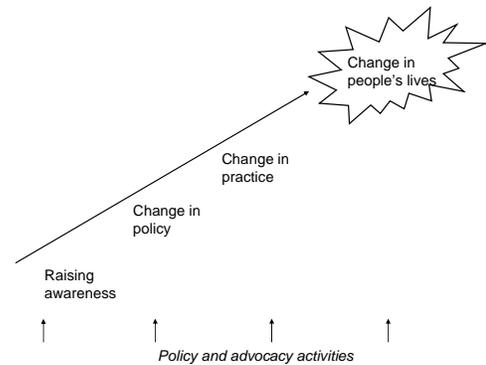
Overall, Oxfam has had an impact on the issues it has prioritised. It is beyond the scope of a study such as this to measure the extent of that impact, or to judge which type of work – international, national or local – derives the greatest benefit, and over what time period. However, given the potential Oxfam's advocacy work seems to possess, *what* it prioritises and *how it works* is critical. Interviewees presented some clear perspectives on these issues, which are described below.

5.1 Does Oxfam's advocacy address priority and appropriate policy issues?

5.1.1 Which contexts?
No respondent questioned the importance of prioritising advocacy in the three countries studied.[31] What was questioned was the timeliness and scope of involvement. A number of interviewees noted that it takes the 'Oxfam machine' a long time to recognise a crisis, and that the crisis needed to be an international priority for it to become a priority for Oxfam as well. This appears to be borne out in each of the three contexts: DRC was off the agenda in 2000/2001; like many others, Oxfam was late in responding to Darfur; and staff from Uganda spoke of having to do 'internal' advocacy on northern Uganda in parallel with external advocacy. Studies have shown the importance of humanitarian information in raising international awareness of crises,[32] and Oxfam could play a useful role in

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[31] The geographical bias of the interviewees means that this is not an objective viewpoint.
[32] See, for example Stoddard A. (2005) *Humanitarian Alert: NGO information and its impact on US foreign policy.* Bloomfield, CT : Kumarian Press which shows

monitoring emerging crises. While re-orienting Oxfam's work towards neglected emergencies may not be feasible, there may be scope within the Rights in Crisis (RiC) campaign to include monitoring on forgotten crises, as well as analysis on the response of the international community to such contexts. Impact here may require less capacity and resources.

In a similar vein, a number of respondents felt that the scope of the agency's involvement in a specific country was too narrow. This relates to the level at which the agency works and the issues which it focuses on. It also raises the question of the responsibility of the organisation to pick up emerging issues in contexts it has prioritised. For instance, many respondents were concerned that a focus on Darfur was obscuring other issues in Sudan. There is also the question of how long the agency remains involved in a context: there was a widespread conviction that Oxfam could raise initial awareness and increase international engagement on an issue, but respondents were less confident that the agency was interested in staying involved over the longer term. While some cynically suggested that this was due to Oxfam's desire to be connected mainly with high-profile issues, it also indicates that once Oxfam has prioritised a context, this sets up expectations for longer-term and broader engagement that Oxfam doesn't appear to deliver upon.

5.1.2 Which level and which issues?

This question prompted much debate within and outside Oxfam. In general, Oxfam has prioritised work at the international level, as well as national-level work that is oriented towards international actors and processes. Even before the RiC campaign crystallised priorities into *protection* and *quality and quantity of aid*, these two issues predominated in the advocacy strategies in the three case study countries. As an international organisation, it is felt that Oxfam has greater influence on international bodies and international issues. However, this focus was challenged by interviewees on a number of grounds. First, success at the international level is self-fulfilling as it is where the majority of time and resources were spent. Policy advisers based in-country noted that their work was primarily oriented upwards and outwards, towards the UK and New York in particular, rather than focused at the field or national level. In a recent terms of reference for a Darfur policy adviser, for example,

the role of humanitarian information in raising awareness of international crises.

engaging with Oxfam International was listed as the top priority, while engaging with the Darfur team was seventh on the list. Many interviewees complained that they did not have sufficient time to work on national processes, stakeholders and staff, and said that the organisation placed more emphasis (and thus they received greater rewards in terms of recognition or advancement) on working on international issues. However, there were differences between programmes on this issue, with interviewees in the DRC indicating that the links were stronger.

The predominance of international issues also raised concerns amongst external actors, who suggested that the links between Oxfam's policy work and its programmes were insufficient. This was believed to undermine the effectiveness of both. Oxfam's policy analysis was widely commended, but some felt that policies were developed without the benefit of programmatic understanding. This emerged particularly strongly in relation to protection, with internal and external interviewees highlighting Oxfam's limited protection programming in some contexts ('they talk about protection but they don't do it'). This seems to undermine Oxfam's credibility and legitimacy on protection policy and advocacy, as well as affecting how the organisation approaches some protection issues. For instance, it was argued that protection is viewed more as an international responsibility than a national, and civil-military relations understood primarily as a question of civilian versus security agendas, rather than one of coordination between the two. Conversely, others complained of limited policy and advocacy on water and livelihoods-related issues, suggesting that Oxfam was frequently absent on these issues at a country level. More could be done, it was suggested, to develop specific policy and advocacy around these issues, as well as to inform international level advocacy with learning from programmes. There was a sense that Oxfam has been 'divorcing thinking and practice' and that advocacy was increasingly viewed as a parallel programme aimed more at affecting change at the Security Council or at capturing headlines, rather than on ensuring change in people's lives. Despite the 'One Programme Approach', there wasn't sufficient investment in ensuring policy and advocacy was used as a tool within programmes and that programmatic staff understood and employed it (see section 9). This is of particular significance at national level and amongst partner organisations or donors. It is unlikely that it has major significance amongst international targets, such

as in the Security Council. It was also felt that Oxfam's recent engagement with the African Union may require a shift in strategy, as well as in tactics. Some believed that protection in Africa, when it is understood, is widely thought of as a premise for western military intervention. If protection advocacy is to be increased, work on this issue may need to be differently framed. Once again, this may underscore the advantage of including work on neglected crises, where peacekeepers are unlikely to feature in policy recommendations.

These findings do not suggest that work at the international level should be scaled back. Oxfam's unique ability to work at different levels emerged as one of its core strengths; one interviewee commented: 'Oxfam is just about the only agency that goes from relief right up to the UN ... it does grass roots, does policy analysis and does international stuff as well'. Policy-makers in-county and externally remarked on the added value of complementary in-country and global analysis and action. However, there was a feeling that there was a need for a greater focus on national and local level policy and advocacy work, which is currently lacking support and often, direction. As outlined above, this would allow for greater coherence between policy and programmes, as well as the increased effectiveness of both. It would increase Oxfam's legitimacy in advocacy through ensuring more concrete links to its programmes, thereby reducing criticisms that Oxfam is 'opportunistic' in terms of its policy work, more interested in high profile activities than affecting change for people on the ground. If Oxfam's policy work was developed from its programming on the ground rather than (or as well as) the other way around, then there is a greater chance of working on priority issues for the people on the ground. Most importantly, however, it would have greater impact on people's lives in the short-term, and perhaps even in the longer-term. This review has highlighted the Oxfam's access to and influence on stakeholders in-country, as well as the ease in demonstrating positive change on people's lives from in-country policy work, relative to work undertaken at international levels. Widening this work to include a greater focus on national policy processes, practice and people would ensure that those with the greatest capacity to change the lives of people with whom Oxfam works – the people themselves and their governments – are central to Oxfam's work. It may even allow for sustained change in national policies and practice rather than international care-taking which can often characterise international response.

Currently, the linkages between international policy staff in international capitals and national capitals are working well, but there is less emphasis on linking in-country policy staff with programmes. Indeed some felt that the issue was greater than just providing linkages, but that there should be greater policy development within national programmes, which could then feed into international action. This suggests, enhancing policy/advocacy capacity on national and programmatic issues commensurate with that currently employed for international work.

A good example of national policy work is that of Tearfund Sudan on issues of sustainable resource management in Darfur. This work emerged out of its work on water and sanitation programming in the region, and a concern that insufficient attention was paid to how issues of water and other national resources were being fought over and destroyed by the conflict. It was also driven by recognition that the humanitarian response was having negative environmental impacts which would potentially undermine people's livelihoods and the crisis in the immediate term, as well as efforts towards recovery in the longer-term. Tearfund lead in-depth research into the issue[33] which was a factor in relief agencies incorporating Sustainable Resource Management objectives into their work; the UN Environmental Programme becoming more active in the region; and greater resources made available for research and programmatic work on national resource management. Such work is a natural fit for an agency with the capacity and resources as Oxfam, which with the right skills and resources at country level, could take forward specific initiatives on changing national policies and practice. This would require a radical shift in focus for the agency, with dedicated policy leads with the requisite technical skills to work on national policy issues along with sufficient resources to undertake research, policy and advocacy initiatives. This could complement international policy and advocacy work with the international and national policy leads each feeding into each others' strategies and activities.

5.2 How Oxfam works

5.2.1 Analysis
Those outside Oxfam, allies and targets alike, praised its analysis. Diplomatic representatives consistently said that engaging with Oxfam at

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[33] See Tearfund (2007) *Relief in a Vulnerable Environment*, at www.tearfund.org.uk

country level was a priority, particularly when delegations were passing through. The combination of field information and policy analysis was felt to be particularly compelling. Policy-relevant briefs and materials were cited as particularly useful. NGO representatives also commended Oxfam's work, and said that the agency's analysis often led the way for the rest of the humanitarian community. Oxfam's in-country policy capacity was said to be crucial, and a model that a number of other agencies are now following themselves.

These views were not, however, shared by those within Oxfam. It was recognised that Oxfam's analysis was better than others', but a number of interviewees felt that Oxfam needed to develop much stronger political economy analysis in order to improve understanding of the underlying dynamics of a situation and to identify key national and international stakeholders and the motivations for their involvement. Others spoke about a lack of robust power analysis and mapping, particularly for non-traditional targets, although it was recognised that such analysis with regard to Africa had improved over the past few years. Several interviewees suggested that the problem was less a lack of analysis and more a failure to act on that analysis, particularly at an African level. It must be recognised that, even with the best analysis in the world (which in terms of the humanitarian world Oxfam appears to have), the agency's ability to fundamentally alter the nature of a conflict is limited. However, if additional analysis is needed this will require additional investment in capacity in order to engage national staff, civil society partners and other national and African actors who together will be able to provide the in-depth contextual analysis that is missing.

5.2.2 Strategy setting

Developing and implementing achievable strategies is a challenge for Oxfam. Some interviewees mentioned insufficient consultation with beneficiaries and field staff, while others complained that too many people were involved across OI. As a result, strategies become over-ambitious documents agreed through consensus, rather than a clear expression of achievable objectives and activities. This was especially the case where the involvement of affiliates was required, with Oxfam first engaging internally and then not allowing sufficient and genuine input from other affiliates.

This seems to indicate a lack of a clear process which clearly establishes who should be involved in the initial broad consultation process, and the much smaller set of individuals involved in developing a strategy. It also reinforces concerns about the disengagement of advocacy from programmes. In terms of process, it suggests insufficient engagement by experienced, informed, senior-level staff, which can ensure that the strategy focuses on issues and activities where Oxfam can genuinely add value. Several interviewees felt that strategy on Darfur had improved following the engagement of the Head of Advocacy and Policy, who focused work on issues where Oxfam had potential influence. However, this level of leadership is unusual and thus processes need to be put in place so that it can be replicated. The regional office appears to be the most obvious 'home' for such a role.

There were differences over whether Oxfam should work on issues where there was little chance of change, but where a moral obligation to act was felt, or whether the priority should be issues where impact was more likely. For example, some felt that, while a cessation of hostilities in Darfur in 2007 would have been a valuable achievement, advocacy was unlikely to bring it about, not least since Oxfam did not have access to key decision-makers. There are no easy answers here, and much will depend on the issue and the context. It is however important to keep in mind that, in conflict situations, Oxfam is operating out of humanitarian or moral conviction. Whilst effecting change is difficult, slow and frustrating, this does not imply that moral convictions should be abandoned for the sake of advocacy 'wins'. The Darfur experience where concerns have been raised that crude pressure to get any peace agreement lead to a partially signed DPA which resulted in more insecurity, and an imbalance of effort to ensure a transition to a hybrid peacekeeping mission may have distracted from efforts towards a political solution should not be forgotten. That said, wider messages must be balanced by other more achievable activities, where Oxfam's added value can be deployed.

Concerns about a lack of focus were also raised in terms of how strategy is translated into activities. In-country policy/advocacy staff complained of being 'spread too thin', with a great deal of time spent on reactive work rather than longer-term planning and activities likely to yield greater results. Examples cited ranged from responding to OI requests for information to developing talking points for meetings with visiting delegates, many

of whom were unlikely to have a major impact on Oxfam's priority issues. There was also felt to be undue emphasis on the development of policy positions (not only in evidence-based research, as outlined above in relation to CSOPNU's work but also in terms of crafting messages), without a requisite emphasis on implementation. Finally, there was a sense that there was a heavy focus on achieving policy change, but little follow-up in terms of monitoring the implementation of the policy. This suggests that Oxfam needs to focus on a clear set of predefined activities, while factoring in time and space for reactive work. In-country policy leads and CPMs should be able to challenge requests for information and should be allowed to absent themselves from ad hoc diplomatic visits where these are considered unstrategic.

5.2.3 Coordination

Interviewees regarded coordination as a 'necessary evil': most saw it as useful, despite the time and effort involved in ensuring that different parts of the organisation were operating in a synchronised way. The fact that there is a clear structure to coordinate advocacy was felt to be key to Oxfam's ability to work successfully on multiple levels. The issue of teleconferences was raised repeatedly, with representatives from the DRC reporting that monthly conferences appeared to work better than more frequent calls, as discussion was more action- and decision-oriented. Similarly, efforts to structure calls around practical actions – such as activities planned against targets – reportedly improved the experience.

Interviewees in the DRC stated that regular calls between advocacy and programme staff allowed for more joined-up analysis and action between different parts of the programme. This facilitated a 'One Programme' approach, and helped to ensure that policy/advocacy staff were aware of programme issues. This kind of collaborative approach may be more difficult in contexts such as Darfur, where security concerns require greater face-to-face consultation.

5.2.4 Managing risk

Overall, staff thought that Oxfam managed risk well. In-country staff in particular were confident in their approach, although some headquarter lobbyists questioned whether Oxfam pushed itself sufficiently to take reasonable risks. Agreed frameworks and policies, such as the 'Cost/Benefit Analysis', were seen as useful, ensured a certain degree of reflection and rigour and should be consistently applied. Again, the involvement of programme and national staff was felt to be particularly important in ensure that a broad range of perspectives were brought to bear. In one example, Oxfam staff were taken hostage in Darfur in 2005 following a riot in a camp. Policy/advocacy staff agreed that the incident should not be discussed in the media, and an interview with the BBC the following day made no mention of it. Programme staff complained that camp residents might perceive the lack of discussion of the hostage as a case of Oxfam shielding the GOS, an aspect of the problem that had not occurred to in-country and regional staff.

We have already seen two instances where serious negative consequences arose from Oxfam's policy/advocacy work, namely the series of press releases in relation to Darfur in 2004, and the *Cost of Conflict* report in Uganda. The fall-out from both instances was major and enduring. In Darfur, it reportedly disrupted the programme, resulted in a reduction of media/advocacy activities for Oxfam and the greater humanitarian community for some time, and it also caused delays in obtaining visas for staff due to negative relations with government. In Uganda, it resulted in acute intimidation of the entire national and international NGO community, it is said to have compounded relationship difficulties within CSOPNU and again resulted in a scale-down in public media work. Both instances happened following a decision to increase pressure, and both involved what people called 'pushy' media personnel. Mistakes will happen. Arguably two major mistakes over a five year period of intensive advocacy in hostile environments is not a bad record. However, it does suggest that there needs to be particular caution at a time when there is a change in media strategy, and also that extreme care needs to be taken in the use of language. It is interesting to note that, according to interviewees, passing confidential information to others, such as journalists and human rights organisations, has had no negative consequences. In both DRC and Darfur, this tactic was cited as a very effective way of managing risk, while relaying important information and messages. Some lobbyists felt that they were not trusted to judge risks in their interactions with key targets. Given the high degree of trust that Oxfam has developed with key stakeholders, such caution is perhaps unnecessary.

5.2.5 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Oxfam is failing to build on the success of its advocacy work, or to learn from its mistakes. Most interviewees agreed that Oxfam does not monitor its work well, is bad at evaluating policy/advocacy

initiatives and has not effectively drawn on or shared the learning that it generates. The problem is lack of time, lack of prioritisation and lack of clear guidelines. The first step in M&E is ensuring a system for decision-making on advocacy initiatives, so that these can be recorded and reviewed against objectives. However, Oxfam is reportedly poor at recording the rationale for decision-making. There are also no guidelines or processes for monitoring and evaluating how a particular advocacy strategy or initiative is going, and there is little reflection following completion. However, there are some exceptions, including an excellent review of the females leaders' trip to Chad mentioned above in section 3.4.4. However, the results of this and similar exercises have not been widely shared. There are also concerns about the objectivity of some reviews, suggesting the need for a peer review process.

While it is always difficult to make time for monitoring and evaluation, Oxfam should consider ad hoc reviews of specific initiatives notable for their success, failure or creativity. For instance, as Oxfam makes efforts to exert influence at an African level, it may be worthwhile reviewing work after two years to gain insights from key targets and stakeholders on how to move forward. Similarly, as it has proved difficult to measure impact at a policy level, an in-depth review of Oxfam's work in one policy process could be useful in enhancing understanding of the levers of change and how implementation can be monitored. In terms of more general monitoring, a simple format for recording decision-making on advocacy initiatives is proposed below, which could serve to both speed up decision-making as well as serve as a basis for review:

- o Objective of Activity
- o Link to Advocacy Strategy Objectives
- o Link to Programme
- o Anticipated Impact
  - in meeting advocacy objectives
  - in meeting programme objectives
- o Risks and Assumptions
- o Policy Resources required
- o Programme Resources required
- o Financial Resources required
- o Coordination of Activity and Ways of Working
- o Timeline
- o Action Plan

Furthermore, the 2008 Darfur strategy includes six-monthly 'pauses' for reflection, a model which should be replicated in other contexts.

Some mentioned that the media department is more effective at monitoring, and some models may be available. The newly-appointed monitoring officer in Oxfam GB should be asked to assist, and efforts should be made to distribute learning broadly.

Another difficultly in terms of learning is that experience and expertise tend to reside in only a handful of staff, and learning can be lost through staff turnover. Exit interviews are therefore critical. Oxfam could also consider supporting departing policy advisers so that they spend their last weeks writing up their experiences and learning, either in-country or after they have departed. An advocacy/policy learning area should be developed on the Oxfam intranet, where document templates and other useful documents can be stored, such as strategies, briefing notes, tools and evaluations of specific pieces of work. As the RiC campaign has prioritised protection and quality/quantity of aid, Oxfam's position papers and analysis documents should also be retained as there is likely to be similar issues faced and policy recommendations posed.

5.3 Allies and partners

5.3.1 Managing asymmetry with international allies

A consistent theme throughout the three case studies is that, despite the benefits of working with others, Oxfam finds this difficult, and so do those with whom it works. One of Oxfam's major challenges is managing the asymmetry that frequently exists between its knowledge and capacity in policy/advocacy and that of its allies and partners. Among allies, Oxfam's leading role was recognised and appreciated, with one interviewee commenting that 'discussions and decisions were made collectively, but Oxfam was the little hand that wrote it'. In Sudan, the benefits to the wider community of Oxfam engaging proactively in the INGO Forum were clear, resulting in a more effective and influential body (see section 3.4.2). This was also the case with CSOPNU in Uganda.

While there are benefits in working with Oxfam, the sense from allies is that the imbalance in the relationship meant that Oxfam sets the terms of engagement. Many reported instances where Oxfam had requested them to sign on to letters or other products, but allowed insufficient time for their input. Oxfam's laborious sign-off procedures also made joint work difficult, as any new input had to go through a round of new internal

negotiations. There were also concerns that, when Oxfam takes on a representational role on behalf of the humanitarian community, it does not always consult widely, or is not fully transparent in terms of the strategy or messages presented. According to one interviewee: 'Oxfam is good at inter-relations [i.e. with targets], but is dreadful at intra-relations'.

Given that Oxfam has taken on a leadership role in policy/advocacy amongst humanitarian organisations, this means that it is at greater risk of being singled out for what is often considered 'political' activities in hostile environments. Effectiveness is also often enhanced through working with others, as the Uganda and Darfur case studies show. At the same time, many key targets understood Oxfam's leadership role, even if it was being presented publicly as joint work. This suggests that Oxfam should continue to pursue opportunities to work with others, but that relationships need to be handled more carefully and sensitively. If this is a priority, which in certain instances it appears to be, then it should be recognised that a time burden is involved. In situations where Oxfam takes on a representational role, it is worth discussing strategies and approaches in advance, as well as highlighting areas of non-agreement. Similarly, where joint work is proposed in-country, it may also be worthwhile to get prior internal sign-off on the overall strategy and key messages, with final sign-off devolved to the CPM.

5.3.2 Working with national partners
A number of Oxfam staff stated that working with national partners as allies should be a priority, as it opened up new information and new access, as well as allowing Oxfam to contribute to longer-term initiatives. This appears to happen infrequently, except in Uganda. While the Darfur Consortium commended Oxfam for its support, one staff member summed up Oxfam's approach to its partners by saying: 'Oxfam likes working alone and writing our papers, then we bring in partners for help … we don't have enough time to build these relationships and engage in the right amount of consultation'.

This is not the place for an in-depth analysis of how Oxfam works with partners, but it is important for an organisation leading international advocacy to understand the knock-on impact of its actions. Often, international organisations crowd out national actors due to greater capacity and access. For all the advocacy on Darfur over the past five years, national organisations have received little

support to bring issues of concern to them to the fore. This lack of engagement is consistent with Oxfam's overall prioritisation of international, rather than national, impact and suggests a missed opportunity for its advocacy work to have longer-term impact. Even at an international level, if Oxfam is serious about influencing African leaders, this may need to become a priority. Where a capacity-building element is included, experience in the DRC demonstrates that this should be run as a capacity-building programme focusing on advocacy, rather than as an advocacy project.

5.4 Capacities and resources

5.4.1 In-country resources
The tables below show the approximate amount of in-country spending on advocacy relative to humanitarian programming. Spending on advocacy which includes expenditure on salaries and advocacy initiatives (meetings, flights etc) by CPD, OI, regional and country-offices is not regularly monitored across different countries and so these tables do not include CPD, regional or OI salaries, nor do they include initiatives funded regionally or internationally, They also underestimate the amount of time spent by the CPM in each country on advocacy. As a rough estimate, however, they indicate that, overall, just under 2% of humanitarian spending in-country has been devoted to advocacy in the three contexts over the three years 2005–2008. In 2007–2008, the average spend was higher, at almost 4%, which presumably reflects the fact that Darfur and DRC are priority countries under RiC. The disparity between different country spends; the limited advocacy expenditure relative to programmes and the lack of comprehensive figures indicate that a more thorough examination of expenditure on advocacy on different countries within and outside the Rights in Crisis framework would be worthwhile in order to monitor expenditure against outcomes; allocate fairly across different contexts and justify increases against programmatic spend.

The tables also do not include a percentage of the salaries of programme staff, who also undertake a large amount of advocacy. The Darfur programme reviewed the time spent by programme staff on representation and advocacy in South and North Darfur, which again provides a rough indication. In North Darfur, programme staff regularly attend 16 weekly meetings, and attend 14 in South Darfur. This does not include meetings with visiting delegations, or the time spent on information management for advocacy and media interviews.

In general, it appears that programme staff spend between 10% and 25% of their time on UN/international advocacy, and between 2% and 10% on advocacy with local leaders and governments. The Darfur example is likely to be slightly higher than in other contexts, but it does suggest a large degree of advocacy that is largely untapped and supported.

While some staff felt that the level of funding devoted to advocacy was sufficient, particularly when compared to other NGOs, many policy staff did not. In particular, more resources would mean greater flexibility to commission research, conduct lobbying trips and undertake local advocacy capacity-building.

Darfur

Financial year	Amount of advocacy funding*	% of humanitarian programme funding
2005–2006	30,143	0.5%
2006–2007	68,621	1%
2007–2008	153,760	3%

* This includes 20% of CPM salary, which was reported as less than the average time spent on advocacy.

DRC

Financial year	Amount of advocacy funding*	% of humanitarian programme funding
2005–2006	19,625	1%
2006–2007	99,274	3.1%
2007–2008	257,159	6.5%

*The DRC CPM spends between 20-30% of time on advocacy

Uganda

Year	Amount of advocacy funding*	% of humanitarian programme funding
2004–2005	2,700	0.2%
2005–2006	19,500	1%
2006–2007	39,500	3%
2007-2008	22,700	3%

* This includes 3.5% of CPM salary, which was reported as less than the average time spent on advocacy

5.4.2 Skills and capacity of advocacy/ policy leads
Oxfam policy staff were highly commended in interviews for their analysis and knowledge. They were praised by external actors for leading

thinking in the humanitarian sector; according to one donor, policy staff are 'very bright people, very tapped into the different mechanisms … [the] Ambassador was very impressed by [them]. Never shy, always have ability to put things forward'. However, as in many other areas of humanitarian work, there was little mention of support or training. Many in policy/advocacy positions spoke about overwhelming workloads: gathering information from the field, undertaking advocacy at the national level and engaging and informing the OI network. This is having an effect on staff turn-over; the level of 'burn-out' is reportedly very high.

While some recent strategy meetings have included a skills component – such as analysis of risk – very little or no training is provided, despite the fact that advocacy depends almost entirely on skills to analyse issues and present arguments. While these skills come naturally to certain individuals, and Oxfam was commended by many for hiring the right kind of staff, external targets and allies suggested that training on lobbying, negotiation and influencing skills might be useful. It was also noted that many advocacy staff favoured an aggressive style. It was felt that this was effective in some instances, particularly in high-level meetings where the 'humanitarian voice' was expected to be strong, but might not always be appropriate. One interviewee said that they were 'afraid to pick up the phone to an Oxfam person as I know that I'll be criticised'. The importance of style was underscored by a representative from another NGO, who spoke of a 'ruthlessly effective' partnership between a CPM and a policy lead who adopted different styles ranging between the forthright and friendly. Enabling staff to master different negotiating skills, as well as training in media work and coordination, may make them more effective, particularly in terms of different approaches in different cultural settings, which was also cited as a weakness. The question of cultural appropriateness is an issue which training can go some way to addressing, but which more fundamentally requires cultural diversity (see below). Finally, a number of policy leads told us that they lacked support in making difficult decisions on engagement with political issues.

Some policy advisers complained of very poor inductions, with little information provided on who the key technical staff were within headquarters should they require support on a specific thematic area. The experience in-country was also problematic, with many policy leads indicating that difficulties in recruitment meant that the

previous post-holder has left by the time that they arrive. Indeed, a number of external and internal interviewees mentioned that transitions between staff are not well-handled. Actors who work closely with Oxfam reported inconsistencies in style and message when staff changed. To an extent this is inevitable, but it again underscores the importance of exit interviews and handover notes, documentation and skills training. An interesting model was applied in the DRC in 2005, where a policy/advocacy adviser with previous in-country experience was tasked with mentoring an incoming advisor for several months. All involved recommended this approach.

A number of Oxfam staff raised concerns about a lack of diversity within policy/advocacy staff, noting that the typical profile was a young, western woman. Diversity is a problem across all humanitarian and development programmes, but it was felt to be particularly acute in this field. Lack of diversity in policy influence is an issue not only of equal opportunities and capacity-building, but also of Oxfam's influence with non-western targets. However, with the current focus on international policy, it is difficult to know how this can be overcome, as it is likely that international staff will be more familiar with international policy processes and institutions and will thus have an advantage at the recruitment stage. However, greater training to programme staff, as well as an increased focus on national policy issues will help build capacity in-country, which would help improve diversity in the longer-term. Facilitating national staff's involvement in international advocacy through short-term advocacy trips to international capitals would have the twin advantage of increasing their exposure to, and understanding of, international policy making, as well as of ensuring in-country perspectives are heard by policy makers. For *Rights-in-Crisis* countries, the potential of providing longer-term 'policy/advocacy' secondments to headquarters in order to grow national capacity as well as inform headquarter knowledge of in-country issues, policies and processes should be considered. However, these are all piecemeal initiatives. If Oxfam wants to increase its influence *in* Africa, rather than simply *on* Africa, then the question of staff diversity will become ever more pressing. Oxfam should consider integrating a long-term objective of staff diversity into 'Africa-wide' campaigning strategies, with resources and human resources expertise allocated to ensure that progress is achieved.

5.4.3 Skills and capacity of programme staff

Despite the amount of time that programme staff spend in representational and advocacy roles, links between programme and advocacy staff are poor. The demands of international advocacy work mean that many policy leads do not have time to work with programmes. One policy lead stated: 'If you have six month deliverables, it is much more acceptable to talk to senior policy makers than to your programmes. This is how success is judged'. At the same time, as argued above, the lack of programme involvement can reduce the effectiveness of advocacy. A programme manager reported that 'Oxfam field staff only feed up to the advocacy people…if they are directly requested or if they have a personal interest. This creates large gaps in information… and doesn't allow the field staff to understand or recognise the value in advocacy.' Closer links with programmes also allows messages to be more finally tuned, risk can be managed more carefully and issues emerging from programmes can be given higher priority. Capacity is one key factor here: when the DRC and Darfur increased advocacy capacity, links with programme staff were said to have improved dramatically. However, it is important not only for international policy staff to draw on programme and national staff, but also to ensure that there are dedicated resources and capacity to support national level policy and advocacy. It is clear from the Darfur resources review above that much advocacy is already being undertaken within programmes, however, the effectiveness of this could be improved through providing training and support to programme staff so that specific policy objectives can be introduced into programmes and this can be followed through the programme cycle. This training could be undertaken by national policy officers if this approach is introduced. In their absence, this should be undertaken by the Regional Management Unit.

5.4.4 Importance of leadership by Country Programme Manager

Many interviewees noted the critical importance of having a senior manager who understands and encourages advocacy. Despite the fact that advocacy is a core role for CPMs, the amount of time devoted to it is not consistent (reports ranged from 10% to 60%, at different times). This will of course depend on the individual, the circumstances and the number of policy/advocacy staff in-country, but for the sake of consistency and continuity it would be useful for the regional office or CPD to give some guidance on the degree to which advocacy should be prioritised.

5.4.5 Role of headquarters / region / in-country

Headquarters and in-country staff agreed that a clearer delineation of roles in different capitals is required. In particular, support functions must be more clearly defined. Some suggested that the region should take a strong skills and training support role, with headquarters being more proactive in terms of technical and thematic support. In particular, it was felt that policy issues of global importance should be determined by headquarters, as the organisational history on the issue and international perspectives may not be available in-country.

A case in point concerns discussions on sanctions in relation to Darfur. In 2004, it was decided that Oxfam should privately push for targeted economic sanctions in order to force compliance with UN Security Council resolutions. This was however a contentious issue, and was not pursued again as a priority until 2007, following the failure of the DPA and intransigence over the deployment of UN troops. There was a sense amongst all involved that this issue was handled badly, with insufficient leadership from headquarters. Several interviewees felt that clear analysis in 2004 would have been helpful in enhancing consistency on the issue. As the RiC campaign has a predetermined agenda, the CPD should be responsible for determining and maintaining Oxfam's position on key issues (use of military force, sanctions, civil–military relations). Internal guidance on specific issues, such as civil–military relations in Darfur, have proved very effective in advocacy.

6. Conclusions, lessons and recommendations

Oxfam is the world leader on humanitarian advocacy. This learning review, although limited in scope, suggests that it has achieved many successes. Oxfam's work through CSOPNU played an important role in helping to raise awareness of the need for a political, rather than a military solution, to the crisis in northern Uganda. Oxfam was also significant in ensuring that protection featured strongly in MONUC's mandate in the DRC, and that the humanitarian consequences of military operations were mitigated. Intensive advocacy led by Oxfam in Khartoum has helped to reduce bureaucratic restrictions on the relief effort in Darfur, an effort which is helping to sustain 4 million people. Oxfam was also instrumental in supporting people's protection in Darfur; through encouraging and facilitating firewood patrols by peacekeepers as well as in halting forcible disarmament in Darfur's largest displacement camp. These are just a few of Oxfam's important achievements. They have come about as a result of the organisation's unique capacity for well-informed, coordinated advocacy, from the grass-roots right up to the Security Council. Drawing on information gained through policy engagement in multiple international locations, and up-to-date analysis and messaging which is made possible through clear coordination structures, Oxfam's unequalled access can ensure parallel lobbying across African and international capitals. Oxfam has a reservoir of knowledge on protection and humanitarian assistance, in addition to a well-honed advocacy machine that can be drawn upon for international advocacy in other contexts.

The effectiveness of Oxfam's international advocacy is, however, undermined by insufficient linkages with programme issues and staff, while in turn programmes are undermined by inadequate advocacy support. This is not just a question of credibility, although this is also at risk, particularly at the national level and within the humanitarian community. Interviewees, both within Oxfam and outside, believe that the organisation's work on protection in particular is undermined because its approach is insufficiently coherent. However, it also impacts other programmatic work. The lack of prioritisation of policy issues relating to Oxfam's core water and sanitation expertise, as well of how inequitable or weak access to resources impact on crises was also criticised. The 'One Programme Approach' is working better in some contexts than in others, but this approach should be backed up with resources. An increase in national policy work

would, arguably, have more immediate impact on people's lives, as well as establish the basis for sustained policy change at the national level.

Oxfam has built up an impressive portfolio of tactics and tools for its international advocacy, and is finding creative ways of working in or around hostile environments. Coordinated and mutually-reinforcing analysis and lobbying in international capitals as well as nationally and locally is particularly effective, as is Oxfam's growing ability to draw on allies and contacts so that core messages can be delivered without attribution to the agency. Rigorous work brings rewards. Evidence-based advocacy underpinned with a strong strategy has proved very effective in raising awareness of humanitarian issues Uganda and the DRC. However, experience has also shown that targeted and timely policy briefs may be more effective in achieving specific policy change. The availability of pre-existing guidelines, tools and thinking has increased Oxfam's influence in situations ranging from civil–military discussions in Sudan to media work to put pressure on donors to contribute their 'fair share' in the DRC. But Oxfam has to be careful not to simply transfer these tactics to African contexts, where cultural differences demand alternative approaches.

The organisation has yet to learn how to overcome the asymmetry in policy and advocacy between itself and other organisations. Many partnerships are extractive, or at least are perceived as such. This affects not only Oxfam's reputation, but also its interests. Both the safety and effectiveness of advocacy is increased through partnerships with other organisations, as has been clearly demonstrated in Uganda and Sudan, but this demands time, flexibility and patience, all of which are often lacking in Oxfam's fast-paced advocacy world. Oxfam has not prioritised working with national partners in advocacy, and this is a major gap. It will become all the more important as Oxfam tries to increase its influence in Africa.

When it comes to policy and advocacy, Oxfam's staff are its greatest assets. There is little investment, however, in supporting them to develop their skills. The strong emphasis on international advocacy has also meant that the advocacy capacity of national and programmatic staff is frequently ignored, though this is a significant resource. This is one reason for the lack of diversity that is evident within Oxfam's policy

and advocacy staff. While significant knowledge and expertise are being developed on protection and humanitarian assistance, too much time and thinking is lost through a lack of investment in learning.

6.1 Lessons and recommendations

Increasing national level advocacy

i. *Oxfam should consider greater investment in policy on programmatic issues at national level.* A division exists between Oxfam's policy and advocacy at an international level and its national-level programming. Oxfam could potentially consider re-balancing its current focus on international issues and international influence in favour of greater policy and advocacy at national and local levels. It could seek to more effectively draw on policy issues emerging from its programmes, as well as supporting greater engagement by programmatic staff in advocacy. This has a number of implications:

  - *Oxfam should consider complementing the capacity and resources it has invested in international policy and advocacy with capacity and resources at national level.* The potential of employing policy / advocacy positions, similar in scale to those currently hired at the international level, to coordinate and develop national level policy and advocacy should be considered.

  - *The coordination mechanism currently operating at an international level could be replicated by a similar configuration at national levels.* The programme in DRC has a similar model where programme and policy staff engage in regular national teleconferences on policy / advocacy issues. Other initiatives such as identifying policy / advocacy focal points in programmes sites should also be explored. In the event that additional capacity is hired to work on national level issues, this position would serve as a natural interface with international policy positions, ensuring that increased coherence between national and international issues.

  - *Greater support should be provided to programme staff to develop their capacity in advocacy and to increase their engagement in ongoing international and national level work.* In particular, greater efforts should be made to include national staff in policy analysis where this is possible, and to develop mechanisms where this is fed into Oxfam's national and international policy/advocacy work. The current workload that many of the advocacy / policy coordinators experience means it requires additional support to be undertaken effectively.

  - *Greater links with protection staff:* In the absence of increased national level capacity and resources for advocacy, greater links should be sought with protection staff in order to ensure greater complementarity between international and national policy and advocacy, to better support practical efforts to increase protection and to include information and analysis emerging from protection programmes.

Contexts: Timeliness and Scope of Engagement

i. *The scope and duration of Oxfam's engagement in priority contexts needs clarification.* This review has highlighted that engagement in issues of international relevance in a context can have the effect of obscuring other important policy issues, as is the case in Sudan in relation to the CPA. Increasing national level advocacy in priority countries may also facilitate Oxfam's engagement in broader and more long-term issues.

ii. *Oxfam should consider including a monitoring function in its Campaign and Policy Division in order to facilitate early engagement in emerging crises or new developments in ongoing crises.* This review has shown that Oxfam has significant strength in raising and maintaining awareness of issues and highlighting humanitarian implications to international policy makers, which could used for impact on new crises.

Tactics and Tools

i. *Research has proved a useful tool for raising awareness.* Research is particularly powerful where there is an absence of information on or awareness of an issue (humanitarian reform in DRC, humanitarian context in northern Uganda) and to counter prevailing attitudes and underpin a strong advocacy position (northern Uganda). However, experience in Uganda indicates that

while independent research is useful for advocacy, the research must be in a format suitable for advocacy (approximately 40-50 pages); it must be underpinned by a strong dissemination and advocacy strategy that takes account of the amount of time involved in undertaking research (often 6 – 12 months). Experiences in both DRC and Uganda indicate that while research is useful to raise general awareness, it is often not the most effective tool for promoting changes in specific policies in the absence of a dedicated follow-up strategy on these issues.

ii. *Timely policy briefs and policy drawing on field-based evidence are particularly effective in changing policy or practice.* Oxfam's work in collating field-based experiences in order to inform and strengthen its policy recommendations has proved effective in relation to Sudan (AU performance, Kalma disarmament and bureaucratic impediments) and DRC (letter on humanitarian consequences of military operations). Oxfam's relatively unique capability to capture experiences at the ground level and use them to inform international advocacy is a tremendous asset. Despite the often heavy capacity requirements, this approach should be utilised wherever possible.

iii. *The availability of pre-existing guidelines and tools increases Oxfam's potential for influence.* Oxfam's civil-military guidelines were instrumental in ensuring Oxfam's influence on this issue in Sudan and the 'fair share' media tool was effective in highlighting different donor contributions to the HAP in DRC. The CPD should be responsible for determining and maintaining Oxfam's position on key issues such as the use of military force, sanctions, civil–military relations and ensuring that these policy positions and other policy tools are made available to policy leads in-country.

iv. *Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are useful in translating policy into practice.* Oxfam has had success in informing or agreeing benchmarks in both Sudan (recommencement of the DJAM process and DRC (MONUC withdrawal). The agreement of benchmarks is helpful as it facilitates Oxfam's work in promoting accountability to agreed policy positions. Oxfam's research in Uganda on community perspectives of peace offers a useful model for the organisation when engaging in political peace processes as the success of a peace process can be monitored over time and

measured in terms of its impact on communities; a potentially less controversial means of engaging on political issues. Finally, where it is possible, the establishment and/or engagement in inter-agency monitoring or oversight mechanisms should be promoted. As the experience in Sudan regarding bureaucratic restrictions demonstrates, they provide a very useful mechanism in ensuring that policy decisions are implemented.

v. *Coordinated lobbying at international and national levels increases impact on both policy and practice.* Oxfam's in-country credibility and influence is increased by virtue of its knowledge of international processes and conversely its legitimacy internationally is grounded in its field presence. Coordination mechanisms such as international conference calls are particularly useful when focused on practical actions. Where coordinated advocacy is mutually-reinforcing it is particularly effective, but greater recognition of, and support to, in-country advocacy is required. Oxfam's work at the Security Council is particularly effective, especially where specific text is provided for inclusion in Security Council resolutions.

vi. *Oxfam has useful experience in the use of non-attributable media in hostile environments.* The experience of working on Darfur and more recently in Uganda prove that investing in relationships with trusted journalists, non-operational allies and development of creative media activities means that media activities are possible, even in the most restrictive environments. This body of work should be documented to inform ongoing and future work in restrictive environments.

vii. *Influencing non-traditional targets requires new approaches.* Recent developments in Oxfam to increase the organisation's influence on non-traditional donors are positive, but there is concern that Oxfam is trying to transfer models and approaches tested in the West. The example of the 'Women Leaders Trip' suggests culturally-appropriate initiatives have greater chances of success, but such initiatives must form part of a wider, long-term and context-specific strategy for building Oxfam's influence amongst new and different audiences.

Work Processes

i. *Oxfam's analysis could be strengthened through greater engagement with national staff and local*

civil society. Oxfam's analysis was widely commended by external stakeholders, but internal concerns about weak analysis could potentially be addressed by more effective engagement with local actors.

ii. *Oxfam's advocacy strategies and activities require focusing in order to achieve greater impact.* The high number of different activities undertaken by Oxfam means that policy and advocacy work risks being reactive, too diverse and lacking sufficient follow-through. Greater efforts should be made at the strategy-setting stage to ensure that strategies are a clear expression of achievable objectives and activities, with the regional office serving as a quality control mechanism where required. In-country policy leads and CPMs should challenge requests for information as well as abstain from activities which don't reinforce the strategy.

iii. *Oxfam should continue to consistency apply frameworks and policies for managing risk.* Oxfam manages risk well, particularly when programme and national staff are engaged in risk analysis. Experience shows that risk increases when there is a change in media strategy, when the use of inflammatory language should be approached with caution. Passing information confidentially to trusted interlocutors is an effective way of managing risk, and current controls over lobbyists' interactions with key targets could perhaps be lessened where the lobbyists are experienced staff.

iv. *Oxfam could improve monitoring, evaluation and learning.* There should be greater prioritisation of monitoring and learning in order to build on Oxfam's experience in advocacy. Oxfam should draw on the media department's monitoring and evaluation models to consider how they might apply to advocacy work and consideration should be given to the inclusion of monitoring activities in advocacy strategies. Ad hoc reviews of new or creative initiatives should be undertaken to guide ongoing work and when evaluations are undertaken they should be more widely shared. Greater advantage could be taken of outgoing staff to ensure that learning is not lost, including potentially supporting them to write up lessons. Oxfam should consider the creation of an advocacy / policy learning website where advocacy tools, policies and evaluations can be accessed.

v. *Oxfam could capture more in-depth policy learning from Darfur, DRC and Uganda where developments on key international issues* (for instance on R2P, peacekeeping, UN coordination and reform, civil military relations). The potential of employing a former policy adviser departing one of these countries should be investigated. Oxfam could also potentially see whether there might be interest in such a learning exercise amongst academic institutions. Oxfam should consider undertaking an in-depth study of its influence on a specific policy process, such as the mandate of peace-keepers in a particular context to understand policy levers and to judge its impact on the ground.

Allies and Partners

i. *Working with others, especially in hostile environments, should be a priority, but Oxfam needs to better manage the asymmetry in capacity that exists between it and other organisations.* Where the opportunity and relationships exist, collective action increases Oxfam's effectiveness and should be prioritised. The additional time and capacity required to engage in collective action should be recognised and built into strategies and planning from the outset. Oxfam should also recognise that its relative strength in advocacy means that it is likely to take on a leadership role in any collective effort. Greater consideration of power imbalances are required and genuine consultation is needed if relationships are to endure. Where representational roles are agreed, clear parameters should be determined in advance and the representational, as opposed to autonomous, authority that derives should be respected. Compromises will be required and the possibility of devolving sign-off capability to a senior staff member once strategy has been agreed should be considered.

ii. *Oxfam's record in working on advocacy with national civil society is poor.* Despite Oxfam's commitment to working with others, this is neither a priority nor a success when it comes to national partners. As a leading organisation in advocacy, Oxfam pays inadequate attention to the impact of its work in eclipsing national voices. When it partners with national organisations, greater sensitivity to the asymmetry is required, with the lessons outlined above even more applicable. Where capacity-building is undertaken, this should be pursued as a capacity-building rather than advocacy project. Should Oxfam pursue greater policy

influence amongst untraditional donors or at the national level, more effective partnerships with national civil society will be required.

iii. *Working through consortia is time- and resource-heavy but worth the cost where an effective mechanism exists or can be built.* Experience from Uganda shows that working in coalitions has a number of potential benefits including increasing influence and access, decreasing risks and especially where the consortia includes national organisations; enhanced information, analysis and credibility. Lessons suggest that working through consortia is likely to be more effective for raising awareness and galvanising action than for influencing change on a detailed set of policy prescriptions. Consortia work best when they develop organically, when a core set of four or five individuals have the interest and capacity to affect change, and the space, both within the coalition and their respective organisations, to operate. They benefit from clear structures and processes, in particular clarity on the overall objective, MOUs, and working procedures such as sign-off and management structures. A secretariat and funding is useful in order to provide dedicated capacity, but this needs to be handled carefully as they can detract from the commitment of consortia members. In general, the secretariat should be of similar seniority and experience as that of its members in order to provide both a coordination and leadership function. A coalition may have difficultly adapting to a change in context, priorities or personnel and thus the membership should be willing to accept that it should be disbanded or adapted when appropriate.

Capacities and Resources

i. *Oxfam's capacity and resources in advocacy are adequate but stretched, more investment will be required should Oxfam pursue new priorities or approaches.* Approximate spends on humanitarian advocacy indicate that it accounts for up to 6% of humanitarian programme expenditure. However, these figures are not accurate and a more comprehensive examination of expenditure on advocacy on different countries within and outside the Rights in Crisis framework should be undertaken. This will allow better monitoring of expenditure against outcomes; fairer allocation of support across different contexts, and can form the basis of arguments for increased support. More resources would mean greater capacity for

research, international lobbying and local capacity-building. New resources are required if new activities or objectives (such as increasing national level policy and advocacy work), are undertaken.

ii. *Oxfam's policy/advocacy staff are highly competent, but would benefit from skills training.* Greater support could be provided to staff to increase their skills and capacity in lobbying, negotiation and influence, especially in terms of adopting different styles for different audiences. Transitions could be better handled; greater direction and support are required to ensure consistency at entry and exit phases. Mentoring new staff works well and should be considered where possible.

iii. *Oxfam should integrate a long-term objective of increasing staff diversity into any 'Africa-wide' campaigning strategies.* The typical profile of Oxfam's policy/advocacy staff is a young, western woman, which has implications in terms of capacity-building, as well as Oxfam's influence on non-western targets. Short-term measures to increase national staff involvement and capacity could include: increased training of programme staff so that advocacy is more consistently included in programme activities; greater involvement of senior national staff in international lobbying in capitals, as well as longer-term policy/advocacy secondments to headquarters. However, without resources and expertise, the bias towards western staff will not be addressed; a critical issue if Oxfam is to increase its influence in Africa.

iv. *The work of programme staff in advocacy could be better supported and capitalised upon.* The interest and capacity of CPMs is critical to the quality and quantity of advocacy undertaken in different contexts. Greater direction on this role could be provided, as there is inconsistency in approaches and prioritisation which is especially evident during transitions. Programme staff spend up to 25% of their time on advocacy, but there is a gulf between their work and that undertaken internationally. Despite the 'One-Programme' approach, policy staff are often quite separate to programmes. Closer links with programmes also allows messages to be more finally tuned, risk can be managed more carefully and issues emerging from programmes can be given higher priority. Oxfam should also consider investing dedicated resources and capacity to support national level policy and advocacy. Training should also be provided to

programme staff so that specific policy objectives can be introduced into programming. This could be undertaken by the national policy staff where relevant, or by the Regional Management Office in their absence.

v. *Roles and responsibilities could be better clarified.* Regional and headquarter support functions could be better delineated, with skills and training support perhaps falling to the region and technical and thematic functions residing in headquarters.

7. People consulted

<u>Current and former Oxfam staff</u>

Ali Hayes, Oxfam Darfur Advocacy Adviser
Alison Giffen, Oxfam Sudan Strategy Adviser
Alun McDonald, Oxfam Sudan Media Officer
Ingrid Macdonald, former Oxfam Darfur / Sudan Advocacy Adviser
Jo Nickolls, former Oxfam Darfur Policy Adviser
Nicki Bennett, former Oxfam Darfur Media Officer
Auriol Miller, Oxfam Country Programme Manager
Caroline Nursey, former Oxfam Country Programme Manager
Melinda Young Oxfam Darfur Programme Manager
Orla Murphy, former Oxfam Darfur Programme Manager
Simon Springett former Oxfam Darfur Programme Manager
Sarah Lumsdon former Oxfam Darfur Programme Manager
Yagoub Osman, Oxfam South Darfur Programme Coordinator
Scott Aronson, Oxfam Programme Manager, South Darfur
St John Day, Oxfam Watsan Coordinator

Ellie Kemp, Policy & Advocacy Coordinator, DRC
Eva Smets, former Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, DRC
Godefroid Marhegane, Humanitarian Advocacy Officer, DRC
Nicki Bennett, former Humanitarian Advocacy Officer, DRC
Juliette Prodhan, Country Programme Manager, DRC
Dan Leveson, Humanitarian Programme Coordinator, DRC
Saskia Nijhof, Programme Quality Manager, DRC
Amna Smailbegovic, former Humanitarian Programme Coordinator
Vincent Koch, former Country Programme Manager, DRC
Nigel Young, former Humanitarian Programme Coordinator, DRC
James Bot, former Country Programme Manager

Savio Carvalho, Country Programme Representative, Uganda
Kathy Relleen, former Policy and Advocacy Adviser, Uganda
Simon Addison, former Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, Uganda
Emma Naylor, former Country Programme Manager, Uganda
Io Schmidt, former Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, Uganda
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Kate Norgrove Oxfam Campaigner
Jo Leadbeater, Oxfam Head of Advocacy
Jamie Balfour-Paul, former Oxfam Humanitarian Policy Adviser
Nicola Reindorp former Head of OI New York Office
Greg Puley, Head of OI New York Office
Jenny Ross, former Regional Policy and Advocacy Coordinator

<u>External</u>

Omar Daair, British Embassy, Sudan
Sara Offenson, former Dutch Embassy Sudan
Dismas Nkunda, Darfur Consortium
Rebecca Dale, former advocacy adviser, International Rescue Committee, Sudan
Karin Sorensen, Danish Embassy Sudan
Lia Copeland, OCHA New York
Stella Ayo-Odongo, former Chair CSOPNU Uganda

Kevin Fitzpatrick, Country Director, CARE Uganda
Caroline Ort, former NRC Programme Manager, Uganda
Julien Schott, former IRC Country Director, Uganda
Steve O'Malley, OCHA New York
Simon Levine, Independent Consultant, Uganda
Paul Mikov, World Vision, New York
Jessica Huber, Head of the NY-based INGO working group on DRC
Ross Mountain, UN DSRSG, DRC
Patrick Vercammen, former Head of ECHO, DRC
Justin McKenzie-Smith, UK mission to UN
Bernard Leflaive, former OCHA and MONUC, DRC
Sarah Grainger, BBC Uganda
Warner Ten Kate, UNDPA, Chissano's Liaison officer in Juba
Tim Pitt - Head of OCHA, Uganda
Jason Grimes, British High Commission, Uganda
Matthias Burbacher, ICC analyst based in De Haag
Phil Vernon, former CARE Country Director, Uganda

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