

Oxfam, buckets, and climate change

This activity shows how Oxfam's responses can meet people's urgent needs for water and sanitation; it shows how we listen to what people need, in order to do this; and it asks young people to think about how these needs will be exacerbated by climate change.

It asks them to think more deeply about the human impact of climate change (optional), and what they can do to help make a difference.

The activity can be used for a wide range of ages.

You will need:

- Oxfam buckets
- Oxfam plastic sheeting
- Flipcharts or paper
- Marker pens
- Laminated pictures of plastic sheeting in use
- Laminated case studies (optional)

NB. You might want to check the Oxfam website and Words and Pictures for lots more information and stories about the Oxfam bucket.

1. The Oxfam Bucket: technology for change

(Optional): Start by asking: "Who has heard of Oxfam? What do we do?"

Pass Oxfam buckets round the audience. Tell them that this is no ordinary bucket. It is very famous and it has saved thousands, if not millions, of lives. A lot of thought has gone into its design features. Ask them: "What makes this bucket special?"

If necessary, give them paper to write their answers down on. **[10 mins]**

Say:

Stand up if you have thought of 5 ideas or more
Stay standing up if you have thought of 6 ideas or more
7 ideas or more...
10 ideas or more...

Any more?

Ask the person who has thought of the most to come to the front or stand up and tell the group what their ideas are.

Ask the rest of the group to add in anything that hasn't been said yet. **[10 mins]**

Here are some answers (not exhaustive):

- It holds 12 litres of water – the amount women have told us they can comfortably carry on their heads (the WHO guideline for water is 15 litres per person per day)
- It has a tight-fitting lid to keep water in and germs and dirt out
- It has a built-in cap on the top which can't be lost, to allow you to take water out without having to pull off the whole lid, preventing contamination
- It is smooth plastic so it is hygienic, and germs can't get trapped inside
- It is curved where the walls meet the base, which can be cleaned more easily
- It has a tap so water can be let out while it is standing upright
- The tap can be removed for easy storage
- The buckets are made of light plastic, which is cheap and easy to produce
- It doesn't degrade in sunlight so will last longer than most containers
- The base is designed to allow air to circulate underneath. This prevents stagnant water where mosquito larvae can breed and cause malaria
- They can be stacked together for easy and cheap transport
- Plastic buckets usually have a little spike on the bottom where they came out of the mould in the factory. These have been rubbed off so they can be carried comfortably on people's heads.

2. The Rolls-Royce of plastic sheeting

Show them the Oxfam plastic sheeting, passing it round the group if you have the space, or let them all come up and examine it.

Say that it is cheap and strong, and doesn't allow sunlight through. Ask: "What could you use this for?" Tell them to come up with as many examples as possible. They can write their ideas down.

Repeat the "stand up if you have thought of 5 ideas" activity (above). Flipchart the ideas if you want. Some ideas:

- Tents or covering for wooden shelters
- Repair damaged buildings
- Toilets or washrooms (to make walls around, for privacy)

- Protect water tanks, stop dirt getting in
- Rainwater harvesting
- Market stalls
- Food storage and drying
- A stretcher
- For carrying loads on
- For carrying dead bodies

Show some photographs of the sheeting in use.

Ask them why Oxfam is interested in plastic buckets and sheeting? Tell them the answers if they don't get them:

- These things are very useful in droughts and floods, and if people have had to leave their homes.
- Everyone needs clean, safe drinking water to live – as well as for washing and cooking.
- Everyone needs basic sanitation – toilets, and waste removal. Without this, disease spreads and kills very quickly.

[10 mins]

3. Oxfam and climate change

Ask: "Why might people need buckets and plastic sheeting more in the future?"

Answers hoped for: People will lose their homes and crops because of flooding or drought; there will be less water in some places; there will be too much in others; more storms, etc.

Ask them:

"What do you know about climate change?"

"Have you experienced climate change where you live?"

"What happens when the climate changes?"

Expect answers about extremes of weather, less predictable weather. A very little bit of the science (e.g. "carbon emissions from burning fossil fuel like coal and oil wraps the earth like a blanket, stopping heat from the sun getting out to space and making the earth warm up".)

Ask: "Why is Oxfam worried?"

- People will be more vulnerable to weather

- People in poor countries are most vulnerable as they have poorest housing, least land, live in risky areas, etc.
- People will lose their crops and animals more often
- Disasters will happen more often
- More people will be likely to die

[5 mins]

4. What you can do

Make sure you leave plenty of time for this part.

Say: some people think there is nothing you can do to stop the climate changing, but this is wrong. What can we do? What can you do?

(a) What can you do yourself?

Ask them: “What will you do?” Get them to shout out the answers, or tell. Or say: “You don’t have to tell us; you could just think quietly about it. Just make sure you actually do it when you get home.”

Expect answers like: Turning off the lights, using low energy light bulbs, using less stuff (resources manufactured using carbon), cycling or walking more, not flying, recycling, etc.

(b) can you get other people to help as well?

You need to ensure that there are some answers about social and political action, not just individual. Ask: who else can you get to take action?

- your friends
- your family
- your teacher or people at school
- youth club
- social networks e.g. Beebo
- your MP
- your local council.

Say: “If you do this, you will be helping the planet AND people. Every7 small action makes a difference.”

Say: more information is available on <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/>

If the age group is appropriate, tell them about the marches in December in London and Glasgow.

Thank them for taking part. **[10 minutes]**

5. Extension task: Case studies (optional – for more advanced audiences)

If you have time, run the case study activity. Divide them into groups and read the laminated case studies (Kenya and Bolivia). They should ideally be able to discuss them in groups to ensure they understand what is going on.

Ask someone from each group to explain their case study to the other group.

[15 mins]

Ask them: “What will happen to these people if climate change carries on in these places?”

Answers: They will lose their homes, livelihoods, crops, be forced to move, get ill, die, etc.

If answers are drying up, prompt by asking: “And then what will happen?”

This shows that climate change is making life harder for poor people all over the world. It means there is more need and more for organisations like Oxfam to do

[10 mins]