

How to... develop your local activist network

Working with others is at the heart of Oxfam. Our campaigns would not have the same strengths or successes without the support of the many partners and alliances we work with. The following steps will help you map your own community, identify potential allies, and build a support network of activists to help you campaign more effectively.

1. Link with other Oxfamers

From Oxjam to Outreach and shops to school speakers, you may be surprised to know how many people are involved with Oxfam in your community. Our handy table will help you find them. Holding an informal meeting to chat about your roles and how you could support each other could be the foundations of a fruitful partnership.

2. NGOs and Community Groups

NGOs, church groups, residents committees, the WI... communities are full of groups brimming with active citizens who have the passion and skills to campaign. What are you doing that might interest them? What issues do they have in common with Oxfam? Find your angle and approach with something they will find hard to resist. Be clear what you want to achieve though. Is this a one off action? Or will this form the foundations of a longer lasting alliance? Volunteer hubs, libraries and local councils often keep details of local groups.

3. Champions and Community Leaders

Who shares your vision? Who has influence where it counts? Champions are anyone who will fight your corner. It could be your local MP, a proactive school teacher, or a council officer. Individuals with time, power, knowledge or influence are really useful to make contact with – so do a little digging and locate yours.

4. Friends and Family

Friends and family by their very nature are there to support us. Drag them out to help you man a stall; invite them to your

next activist party; take the Sisters on the Planet DVD with you when you visit. If something interests you, there is a big chance it will interest them too.

5. Self-promotion

Next time you hold an event – print some flyers and posters or write to the local press. Many papers have event listings, and a good photo and well-written press release will help you get a story in local media. Don't forget to include your contact details so potential activists can get in touch. Lots of successful recruitment happens at public events, so make sure you have information available about how people can get involved.

6. Social networking

If you want to reach new audiences or involve young people in your activities, set up a FaceBook or MySpace account. Creating a virtual Oxfam group is a fast way to recruit and communicate with interested people, and invite them to your events. www.facebook.com www.myspace.com

7. Putting it together

Building a network takes time so it's worth developing an action plan. Consider: who you are going to prioritise and why; what campaign/action you will use as your hook; what you want to achieve from working with them; what they will gain from the experience; how long term the relationship should be; and what resource will be required to maintain it.

If you know other tried and tested ways to recruit activists, or you have built effective local alliances, we want to hear from you. **Send a letter or article to active@oxfam.org.uk and we'll include it in activist news.**

Oxfam contact	What they do	Why contact them?	Where you can find them
Oxfam groups	Mostly campaigning, some fundraising	More people power to develop campaigning with	All over the UK. www.oxfam.org.uk/get-involved/campaign/activists/map to find your nearest group
Outreach	Campaign at local gigs, festivals and club nights for Oxfam	Co-ordinate activity and help each other	To find out who your local Outreach Co-ordinator is, email ssaunter@oxfam.org.uk
Oxjam	Organise music events to raise funds for Oxfam	Building campaigning capacity to Oxjam events	Events and contact are listed online: www.oxfam.org.uk/get-involved/fundraise/oxjam/index
Shops	Sell products to raise funds for Oxfam	From hosting house parties to starring in media stunts – shops are a visual asset to any campaign	Find your local shop online: www.oxfam.org.uk/shops/contentshopfinder and arrange a chat with the manager
School speakers	Talk to schools about Oxfam	So they know who to direct teachers to when they express an interest in campaigning	Email: jmclaverty@oxfam.org.uk to find out who your local speaker is