

VOICES

AUTUMN/WINTER '25



“

Every day is different, but our goal stays the same.

”

Faith Sharleen shares her activism journey in Zimbabwe

ACTION IN FOCUS

04



Sainab discusses dangerous border crossings

07



Moses is helping people prepare for natural disasters in Tonga

08



Pramila is representing her local constituency in Nepal



OXFAM

WELCOME TO VOICES

Welcome to the latest edition of VOICES, your supporter magazine connecting you with powerful stories from your global community.

For this edition, we’re focusing on the theme of action, including all the different ways we can take action – big and small – to tackle the causes of injustice and inequality around the world.

Throughout, you’ll find stories told by people in their own words – because we tell our own story best. What unites these voices is the belief that the world can be better and that change starts when we act.

As a valued member of our global community, we encourage you to take action in any way that works best for you.

Some of us will choose to share petitions or contact our local representatives. For others, action might mean taking part in a fundraising event, choosing to buy second hand or supporting independent creators like Minu and the Sourced by Oxfam range (page 11).

It can also mean talking to our friends and loved ones; speaking out and speaking up for the things that truly matter to us. Whatever you choose, every act of solidarity is a powerful, important and meaningful way of pushing for real change.

On page 4, you can read Sainab’s powerful story and see how she is now using her voice to raise awareness about the humanitarian crisis at the Poland-Belarus border. Opposite, activist Faith Sharleen shares how she’s working with her community in Zimbabwe to transform how women’s unpaid care work is recognised and valued.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of VOICES. However you choose to support your global community, thank you for taking action alongside us. Together, we’re building a fairer and more equal world.

Team VOICES

Cover image: Faith Sharleen. Ziphongezipho Ndebele/Padare/Ekundleni Men’s Forum

IN THIS EDITION:

04



Sainab tells her Poland-Belarus border story



06

David is advocating for gender equality

07



Moses is preparing people for disasters



08

Pramila is representing her constituency

10



The Norris family remember their friend, PJ



11

Minu celebrates her career as an artisan



With equal opportunities, women will SUCCEED.”

The burden of unpaid domestic and care work still largely falls to women, keeping many in poverty. Oxfam and partners are challenging this inequality in Africa, the UK and globally through our WE-Care programme. Below, activist Faith Sharleen explains how she is working with Bekezela Home-Based Care in Zimbabwe to make sure care work is fairly valued.

My path into activism

My journey into my work was born out of lived experience and the conviction that if women and girls are given equal opportunities, they will succeed.

In Zimbabwe, and the world over, I have seen how our contributions as women and girls remain invisible. Unpaid care work, such as cleaning, limits women’s access to financial, political and educational opportunities. The women who raised me were not valued for the work they did. But these mothers continuously give me the strength and voice to be an activist.

Amplifying the voices of care givers

Every day is about raising women’s voices and making sure their needs are recognised.



Faith Sharleen raises the needs and concerns of women at the Kenyan National Assembly. Fredrick Otieno/Oxfam

So far, we’ve trained 120 women, men and young people as community Care Champions. Together, we are shifting the narrative that care work belongs just to women. By conducting household time-use surveys, talking to community leaders and engaging government officials, we’re helping everyone to recognise care as a collective responsibility.

Speaking to whole households

Engaging women and men enables us to start conversations about shared responsibilities. For example, our household time-use surveys revealed that women in our district spend six to eight hours on unpaid care work per day, whereas men spend two hours. By showing who carries the greatest load, we can come up with the right solutions.

Shifting the narrative

When speaking to people door-to-door, the Care Champions and I share stories that the families will relate to, so individual households can find ways to redistribute tasks more fairly.

With policy makers and politicians, our conversations are more formal and strategic. Care work is framed as an economic and development issue



Faith Sharleen (right) stands outside the National Parliament of Kenya with Hon. Sabina Chege (centre) and Jess (left) from the Women’s Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence (WALPE), after a roundtable discussion on gender development. Fredrick Otieno/Oxfam

which limits women’s participation in economic, social, political and educational spaces.

We are always pushing for recognition, redistribution and representation of unpaid care work by investing in care-related infrastructure and services.

Petitions are powerful

Recently, through our Care Champions, we found that women were having to walk five to ten kilometres to reach the nearest child day care centre. To address this, we launched a petition. Our campaign gained 500 signatures, and the local authority has passed a resolution to build three day care centres, to reduce the distance and time caregivers have to walk to take their children to childcare.

Taking action together

To the Oxfam global community: we appreciate the struggles you are facing and we value your continued solidarity and partnership.



76% of all unpaid domestic and care work is done by women worldwide



OXFAM PARTNER BEKEZELA HOME-BASED CARE
Bekezela Home-Based Care is committed to improving the lives of individuals and communities in Zimbabwe. The organisation’s vision is a world where everyone can thrive, enjoy life and have their rights protected and realised.

LEARN MORE ABOUT WE-CARE

Oxfam’s WE-Care programme is a collaboration between some of our partners, working women, girls and men to level gender inequality by reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work. To learn more, scan the QR code or follow this link: oxfam.org.uk/voiceswecare



“
The whole world
should hear my
STORY.”

In the forest at the Poland-Belarus border, refugees are caught in a dire situation. As neither country wants to welcome people seeking asylum, many are facing violence from authorities on both sides in an ongoing human rights crisis. One of these people was Sainab. At 16, she was forced to leave her home in Somalia to seek safety, fleeing forced marriage and female genital mutilation* (FGM). Now, she has started a new life in Germany and is committed to speaking out about FGM and the humanitarian crisis she witnessed when crossing the Poland-Belarus border.

Having fled Somalia, Sainab now lives in Germany and speaks out about FGM and the crisis at the Poland-Belarus border.
Wojtek Radwański/Oxfam



I would like to tell you a story

Once upon a time, there was a little girl born in Somalia. She loved school and she dreamed of becoming a doctor. But a terrorist group made this dream impossible.

This young girl was kidnapped by a terrorist group because she was trying to help other women get an education. She faced many hardships, such as forced marriage and FGM. All this violence made her decide to leave her home country, hoping to find a place where she could make her dreams come true.

This is the girl standing before you now. My name is Sainab. I am here today to share what happened to me while crossing the Poland-Belarus border.

Reaching the Poland-Belarusian border

Imagine a 16-year-old girl trying to cross many borders, having never travelled alone and with no family with her. She has no idea what the route looks like – or how there is no kindness.

When I approached the Poland-Belarusian border, I was in a group with eight other people. I knew that I had to cross the border fence to live, but I was scared that I would die. I spent days there waiting for the chance to cross this border, with little food or water. I was praying, trying to give myself hope. I still remember what the smugglers shouted when we were trying to cross the fence, “Wake up! Faster! Go, go!” I remember my heart beating fast.

The hardest part of my journey

When I crossed the border I lost my group. Lots of groups divide there. I ran through the forest completely alone, checking my back all the time for Polish soldiers; I was afraid they would catch me. I had not eaten for a long time, so I had no energy.

I was close to the river so I was going through a lot of mud and swamp land. I was wet and slow, even walking on my knees to get safely to dry soil. It was getting dark when I entered yet another swamp. I was exhausted and couldn't move. I decided to call the humanitarian organisation, Egala, and ask for help.

Finding help from Egala

Oxfam partner, Egala, found me in the swamp. I will never forget how they hugged me, and their first words: “You are not alone.” They helped me get out of the swamp, gave me food, water and medical help. We are from different countries and cultures but they still came to this dangerous place to help me. No judgement, no racism, just willing to help.

Sainab sharing her story at a conference in Warsaw.
Wojtek Radwański/Oxfam



This meeting made me a new person, in both body and soul. I realised I too wanted to help people at the border. Today, I am telling you my story to raise awareness about what is going on at the border: the whole world should hear it.

My new life in Germany

I am now living in Germany, where I have been granted asylum. Since I arrived, I've learnt German and have been working to get my documents and qualifications ready to start university here. I want to study medicine, and will be able to start medical school early next year.

In the meantime, I am continuing to speak out and raise awareness about FGM, and the border crisis between Belarus and Poland. I am working with organisations in Germany, speaking at panel discussions and workshops to let people know what is happening at the border: how the soldiers are treating people and what people who are crossing the border are going through today.

My focus now is helping more people at the border, and continuing to raise awareness so people can support organisations responding to the crisis.

*FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

FGM encompasses all procedures involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs, for non-medical reasons. FGM can cause women long-lasting physical, emotional and psychological trauma and in some cases, death. For more information about FGM or to find support, please visit: gov.uk/female-genital-mutilation-help-advice

EGALA

EGALA
Egala is a grassroots organisation providing humanitarian aid, medical support and legal assistance to people facing danger at the Poland-Belarus border. Oxfam partnered with Egala in 2023 as part of its response to the humanitarian crisis at the Poland-Belarus border.

BRUTAL BARRIERS:
READ THE REPORT

To learn more about the humanitarian crisis at the Poland-Belarus border, read our “Brutal Barriers” report. Scan the QR code or visit: oxfam.org.uk/voicesbarriers



 IN CONVERSATION

 There has to be equality in our **COMMUNITY.**

Alongside women and marginalised genders raising their voices and taking action, men can be powerful allies in advancing gender equality around the world. In Uganda, David shares how he and other men in his community have become champions for women's rights and gender equality by working with Oxfam partner, Youth Empowerment to Act (YETA).

Why did you become an equality champion?

I live in a village in the Imvepi refugee settlement, Uganda. We have observed that in some cultures, women are not given leadership positions. As gender equality champions in this community, we stand behind women to become leaders. We know that it is good for women to be leaders and we support them. Secondly, the work of a male

gender equality champion is to talk to other men, because there are a lot of men in this village and most of the problems happening in the community are caused by men.

What has the impact been?

Previously, men used to oppress women and didn't allow them to voice their opinions. In those days, there were a lot of misunderstandings between men and women – they fought constantly. Since gender



David is one of many male gender equality champions in Imvepi refugee settlement, Uganda. Muhumuza Joseph/Oxfam

equality champions started talking to other men in the communities, these arguments have reduced. There is more understanding between couples, who are now making decisions together.

What does equality mean for the community?

We want women to lead because their voices have been suppressed. They should become leaders so that they can raise the issues affecting them. Through women, information reaches the entire community – even the most vulnerable.

When men support women, home life becomes more peaceful. As a gender equality champion, I feel good because it helps me with work and it makes me feel great. We have seen great changes in men encouraging women. So for me, this clearly shows that more men are understanding the need to support women. There has to be equality in our community.



David speaks to members of his community about gender equality. Muhumuza Joseph/Oxfam

 We are **PREPARED.**

When disasters strike, marginalised communities, such as elderly or disabled people, often face the greatest risks – especially if their specific support needs are not factored into emergency response planning.

As an elder and a leader in his community, Moses works closely with Oxfam partner, Tonga National Youth Congress, to make sure that everyone in his Disability, Elderly and Widows (DEW) group is prepared for disaster. This includes making plans that take members' mobility or communication needs into account. This preparedness is building resilience and helping to save lives.

Moses's Story

My name is Moses, and I have lived in Ha'apai my whole life. The people of Ha'apai are familiar with hurricanes and with the storms. We know storms come every year. This is the way of Ha'apai.

When I was young, I was very active and very strong. I'm a good speaker and can connect with other people.

I have a disability so Seilala, my caregiver, looks after me. Because I speak very well, I can contact other people. This skill led to me becoming the director of the DEW group.

Our group helps people with disabilities. We have 133 members in Pangai and Nuku'alofa, Tonga's capital. Many use walkers or wheelchairs. If a disaster happens, they might not be safe. Our aim is to help and assist people.



The Tonga National Youth Congress helped to supply water, after a recent disaster. Rachel Schaevitz/Oxfam

During a recent hurricane, the water supply broke down. The government owns the main water supply and manages it with a committee. Our group manages the only other water supply in the area. To help fix the problem, we cleaned the roofs of the houses and buildings to collect rainwater, and then contacted the government to supply fresh water.

The main aim of our association is to supply clean water to DEW people first, but we also share with others when we can. If a disaster happens, I believe our community is ready.



Moses helps marginalised individuals in his community build resilience against natural disasters and recover in the aftermath. Rachel Schaevitz/Oxfam



TONGA NATIONAL YOUTH CONGRESS
Oxfam's partner, Tonga National Youth Congress (TNYC), trains young people in disaster-preparedness and response. The TNYC collaborates with other local community groups to make sure that marginalised people are prepared for natural disasters and can stay safe after catastrophic events. On the remote islands, Ha'apai, TNYC worked with the DEW (Disability, Elderly and Widows) group to make sure everyone had clean water after a hurricane.

LEARN ABOUT OXFAM'S WORK IN TONGA

To find out more about how Oxfam and partners are supporting communities in Tonga, scan the QR code or visit: oxfam.org.uk/voicestonga



“I hope to keep serving
MY PEOPLE.”

Pramila is a farmer and mother who has overcome adversity to become a government representative for her village, Haldyaam, Nepal. By working with Oxfam and partner Rural Women's Development and Unity Center (RUWDUC), Pramila strengthened her leadership skills and took action for her community when a new road destroyed their water supply. This is her story.

Facing challenges

In early 2024, the village of Haldyaam, Nepal, urgently needed a new road. However, the road's construction came at an unexpected cost: it cut off the main supply of water serving the village. For two months, people from Haldyaam had to take a long trip to fetch water from a local river, so they could cook, bathe and water vegetable gardens.

Fixing the broken water system

As a locally elected representative, Pramila quickly took action for her community. Despite significant governmental budget cuts, she was able to make the case for her village and secure all the funding needed to repair the damaged water system. Pramila also successfully lobbied for a budget for a new irrigation system that will pump water up

from the river to nearby fields, and store it in a water tank. This new system means people don't have to rely on monsoon season rains, and can grow wheat, mustard and rice even during the dry season.

Becoming a leader

At the start of her role as a local representative in 2017, Pramila went through a learning curve and experienced challenges with discrimination because she is a member of the minority Dalit community. In Nepal, Dalit people have been historically subjected to widespread social exclusion and are extremely marginalised in society.

Pramila says:

“During my first tenure, I had limited knowledge and skills, I was often referred to as a ‘Dalit



Pramila speaking to members of a women's cooperative during its annual meeting.
Rashik Maharjan/Oxfam



Pramila is a farmer and mother and has been elected to represent her community.
Rashik Maharjan/Oxfam



8,554
people reached
by Oxfam's Gender
Justice Programme
in Nepal



900
youth organisations
received training in
gender justice and
women's rights

member.' The decision making was dominated by male leaders and women were confined to ceremonial or membership positions. I did not have the knowledge to make substantial contributions or articulate the community's demands. I did not know the process and I was not confident in public speaking.”

Working with Oxfam and partners

To overcome these challenges, Pramila worked with Oxfam partner, RUWDUC, and took part in a project called Transformative Leadership of Women Leaders in Nepal.

Through this programme, she was able to have training in public speaking, learn about gender-based violence, and understand more about women's rights and how to advocate for people's political rights. This support has helped Pramila to represent everyone in her community.

Fulfilling her childhood dream

Being a local leader has been a lifelong dream for Pramila, who grew up watching her father take on a similar role in the community. However, as a mother and farmer, it was a passion she had to put aside for a time because she was so busy. Pramila explains:

“My dream was long forgotten as I married young and was soon overwhelmed by household responsibilities including raising my two children.”

**“I want to
be elected to
more decision-
making roles.”**

But with the right support, training and persistence, Pramila is pursuing her dream and was re-elected, in testimony to the respect the local community has for her work.

Pramila told us:

“I hope to keep serving my people. I want to be elected to more decision-making roles so I can better serve the people.”

**RURAL WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
AND UNITY CENTER**
Founded in 1995,
the Rural Women's
Development and
Unity Center (RUWDUC)
believes that women
and youth groups can
be catalysts for change
and development in
their communities, and
supports them to do so.



**LEARN MORE ABOUT
PROJECTS IN NEPAL**

Alongside our partners, Oxfam has been working with communities in Nepal for 40 years. To learn more about the projects, scan the QR code or follow this link:
oxfam.org.uk/voicesnepal





PJ was ultimately saying, I TRUST YOU.”

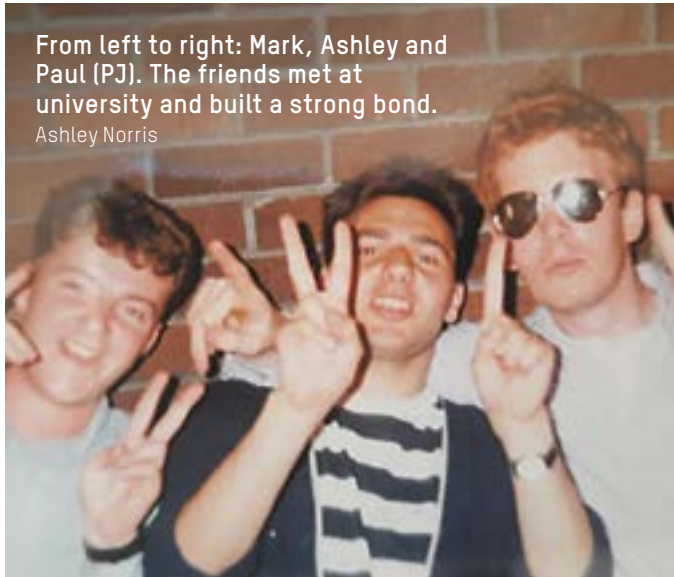
When their family friend, Paul (PJ), died of bowel cancer, Ashley Norris, his wife Deborah and their children were devastated. Before he died, PJ entrusted the family with a portion of his estate, encouraging them to leave gifts where it mattered most. Here, Deborah shares their family’s story of deciding to donate part of PJ’s legacy to Oxfam.

Remembering our friend, PJ

Ash, PJ and a couple of other mates first met at university. They formed a really close bond, united by joint interests: football and music. PJ treated us as his family. So when he was sadly diagnosed with bowel cancer, he made us joint trustees of his Will. He had given his friends his legacy.

Overcoming challenges as a family

We have gone through some difficult things as a family, and PJ was always there for us. Our youngest, Astrid, was diagnosed with cancer when she was four. She got through it but not without bumps along the road. The trauma has had knock-on effects for us all.



From left to right: Mark, Ashley and Paul (PJ). The friends met at university and built a strong bond. Ashley Norris

What matters to us

Ash took care of PJ in the last year of his life, going to visit him often. They’d talk. PJ had said ‘do what you need to do to make a difference’. I asked my girls where we should leave PJ’s money. At that time, Astrid was making jewellery, selling clothes and donating proceeds to people in Gaza. She felt a great empathy for what people are going through, and said we should focus on trying to help more families there.

“Our objective is to make a difference.”

Making our decision

We decided to leave part of PJ’s estate to Oxfam because of its name, legacy and the presence it had in our lives growing up and going to its shops. We were also moved by the campaign work. I spoke to a fundraiser at Oxfam who reassured us that the money would be accounted for. She would even send me reports from Gaza. There was a feeling of honesty in what they said they could do, and how they were doing it.

A gift for Oxfam, from PJ

Deciding where to donate PJ’s legacy was a journey, but we felt comfortable that it would go to a trusted partner in Oxfam. Through Oxfam, PJ’s legacy could make a better life for other people.

LEAVE A LEGACY. STAY IN THE FIGHT.

If you believe in building a fairer, more equal world, you can stay in the fight by leaving a gift in your Will to Oxfam.

Scan the code or visit the website below to learn more or sign up for a free gifts in Wills guide: oxfam.org.uk/voicesgiftinwill



Deborah and Ashley are supporting Oxfam in memory of their friend. Andy Oxley/Oxfam



Minu weaves a basket, as part of her job as an artisan for Hajiganj Handicrafts. Sk Ahmed Ullah



My job means our dreams COME TRUE.”

The Sourced by Oxfam range brings together the best of ethical, sustainable and new items from around the world, all carefully sourced by our team.

Hajiganj Handicrafts, a Sourced by Oxfam retail partner based in Bangladesh’s Nilphamari district, is working with artisans including Minu to find sustainable work in the form of woven baskets. Through this support, local women can make an income so they have the financial independence to support themselves and their families now and in the future.

As part of Hajiganj’s plan to grow, Oxfam is also supporting the company to raise wages, allow permanent artisans to become shareholders of the company and set up a pension scheme for retired artisans.



Minu’s story

“My husband is a rickshaw van puller. Sometimes he works as a day labourer. With just his income, it was very difficult for us to support our family of eight.

“With my job at Hajiganj Handicrafts I can earn a good amount and support my family. From my earnings I am covering my two children’s total education cost, now they are going to school regularly. We can buy good food for our family, and good clothes for our children. My dream is to buy a big house for our family.

“A secure job at Hajiganj makes us more relaxed as we are getting a retirement fund for our future savings. My job at Hajiganj means our dreams come true.”



HAJIGANJ HANDCRAFTS
Hajiganj Handicrafts has been training women to basket weave since it was first established in 1998. Based in Bangladesh, the company helps create sustainable jobs for women so they can become independent members of society.

Since 2023, Hajiganj Handicrafts has been producing handcrafted products for Oxfam’s Sourced by Oxfam range. By working together, Hajiganj has been able to employ over 600 women artisans, including promoting 35 artisans to permanent employees, who all make a liveable wage.



Hajiganj products in an Oxfam shop. Fiona Finchett/Oxfam

SHOP HAJIGANJ PRODUCTS AND MORE

Every purchase from the Sourced by Oxfam range supports people-focused businesses like Hajiganj Handicrafts in the long term, so more individuals can make a regular income to cover the cost of education, food and more. Explore our collection in shops or online now: oxfam.org.uk/voicesshops



We hope for a complete CEASEFIRE.”

During the ongoing Israeli military offensive, pregnant mothers such as Suhad are doing all they can to protect themselves and their unborn children.

When Suhad learnt she was pregnant, she faced immense hardship. Because of the Israeli government’s blockade of aid, she was unable to get medicine for her thyroid condition. And with large parts of Gaza experiencing famine, food was scarce.

Assistance from the Women's Health Center, an Oxfam partner, helped Suhad get the urgent support she needed to protect herself and her baby: “I was so happy. They provided treatment. They also told me they would perform an ultrasound and follow up with me every month, and that my baby was doing well.”



Suhad received support from Oxfam partner, the Women’s Health Center.
Alef Multimedia Company/Oxfam

The stories and opinions shared in VOICES belong to our individual contributors, with minimal editing from Oxfam GB. All language and cultural experiences are reflective of our contributors’ lived experiences.



LET'S HEAR YOUR VOICE!
SCAN THIS QR CODE TO FILL OUT OUR SURVEY AND SHARE YOUR
THOUGHTS ON VOICES, OR GO TO: [OXFAM.ORG.UK/VOICESURVEY](https://oxfam.org.uk/voicesurvey)

