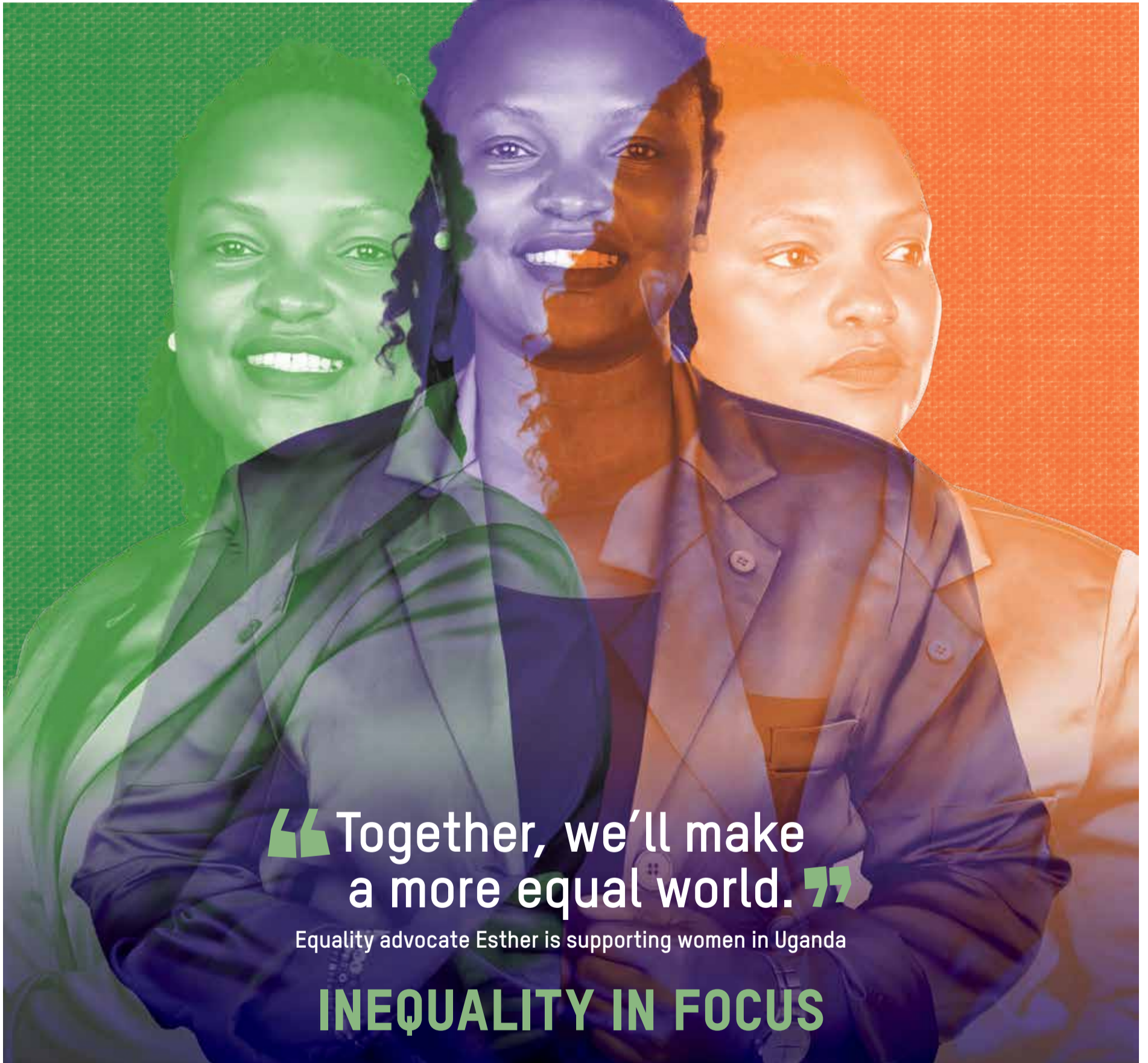


# VOICES

SPRING/SUMMER '24



“ Together, we’ll make a more equal world. ”

Equality advocate Esther is supporting women in Uganda

## INEQUALITY IN FOCUS

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Elizabeth reflects on her COP experiences over the years

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Living and sharing values with Colin in Wales



OXFAM



## A NOTE FROM TEAM VOICES

Welcome to the latest edition of VOICES, your supporter magazine connecting you with your global community, fighting poverty and injustice around the world.

For this edition, we're looking at a subject that touches every human life on our planet: inequality. Whether we're conscious of it or not, inequality can affect every part of our lives. From the places we live and the opportunities we have, to the clothes we buy and the food we eat – inequality is everywhere. And while it harms many of us, it also actively benefits some of us too. That's why it's up to everyone to think about inequality, and how we can work together to create a fairer world.

In VOICES, you'll find stories of people doing just that: challenging the systems that hold so many of us down. A major theme is unpaid care and domestic work, the undervalued labour that all of our societies depend on. You can read more about some of the ongoing work to shift how care work is seen and who does it in Esther's article, as well as in Ganga and Clare's stories (p4), who both take on unpaid care work every day.

Right now, conflict and the climate crisis are among the biggest drivers of inequality. With millions of people still displaced from Ukraine, founder Marian (p7) is helping people shelter in Romania. Humanitarian worker, Huwaida, is supporting people in Gaza (p8). And climate activist Elizabeth Wathuti discusses how to make sure the climate movement platforms the voices of people most affected (p6). It's vital that people tell their own stories, so in VOICES you'll always hear from people directly.

Thank you so much for being part of our community, and taking the time to think about how we challenge unequal systems together.

Yours,  
TEAM VOICES



**MEET HALIMA BEGUM, OUR NEW CEO**  
Welcome to Halima Begum, the new chief executive of Oxfam, GB. Halima has a huge amount of experience, having been CEO of ActionAid UK, and previously CEO of the Runnymede Trust.

## IN THIS EDITION:



A day in the lives of Ganga and Clare



Marian is providing shelter for refugees



Colin discusses living and sharing values



Meet our retail community

Esther is founder of Gals Forum International, an Oxfam partner based in Uganda.  
Charles Kalule Bagenda



Societies depend on unpaid care and domestic work. But when we fail to value this work, women often have to fit it in where they can. This holds women back from paid work, drives inequality globally, and harms everyone by undervaluing women's roles in our society. Esther, director and founder of Gals Forum International, an Oxfam partner, is changing the picture for unpaid care work in Uganda.

### I am Esther Namboka

I am a mother of four children, born and raised in Kampala, Uganda's capital. Being born a girl meant my destiny was to take on unpaid care and domestic work, which would limit my participation in opportunities that are valued more by society. To challenge this destiny, I founded Gals Forum International. We work with families and communities to reduce the time women alone spend on unpaid labour and domestic work. We also support the youth with mentorship and training, raising awareness of women's rights, sexual and reproductive health and the importance of education.

### What is 'unpaid care and domestic work'?

The day-to-day lives of women share one important characteristic: unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) is seen as our responsibility. Around the world, women spend on average between three and six hours a day on unpaid care activities, while men spend between half an hour and two hours. These activities are considered work because, theoretically, one could pay a third person to do them\*.

\*oxfam.org.uk/valueofwork

### Managing my career and family

When I got married, the reality of proving myself to be a great wife hit me hard. I was in paid employment, between 8am to 6pm. After work, I would rush home to carry out the unpaid housework that was waiting for me, as my husband went out to socialise, even though we had both been at work all day.

### Our partnership with WE-Care

In 2018, Uganda Women's network approached my organisation to implement a WE-Care project funded by Oxfam. In the beginning, it looked challenging, because of all the social norms around the subject matter. We knew we had to introduce the project in its most easily understood way, keeping in mind that it would take time to transform people's mindset to change this inequality. Otherwise, we would risk the programme being misinterpreted and rejected in the communities.

### Engaging whole communities

We formed a community advocacy group to give a voice to our work. We raised awareness of UCDW at a grassroots level so that we could tackle it at a national level and in policy-making. Men, including motorcycle riders, have become male champions in supporting their families in doing UCDW, and now they are continuously engaging other men in their communities. The project has helped communities realise that sharing work is important because it saves time and benefits the entire family.

### Collaboration is key to our success

Our campaigning work has led to so many improvements. With our support, women have been able to set up childcare centres in the markets where they work. In another community, a woman councillor has identified land where a day-care centre can be set up, so mothers can take on more paid work. And the government has developed the National Employment Act that is addressing UCDW issues. Our key learning is that working alongside communities and leaders makes advocacy easy.

### LEARN MORE ABOUT WE-CARE

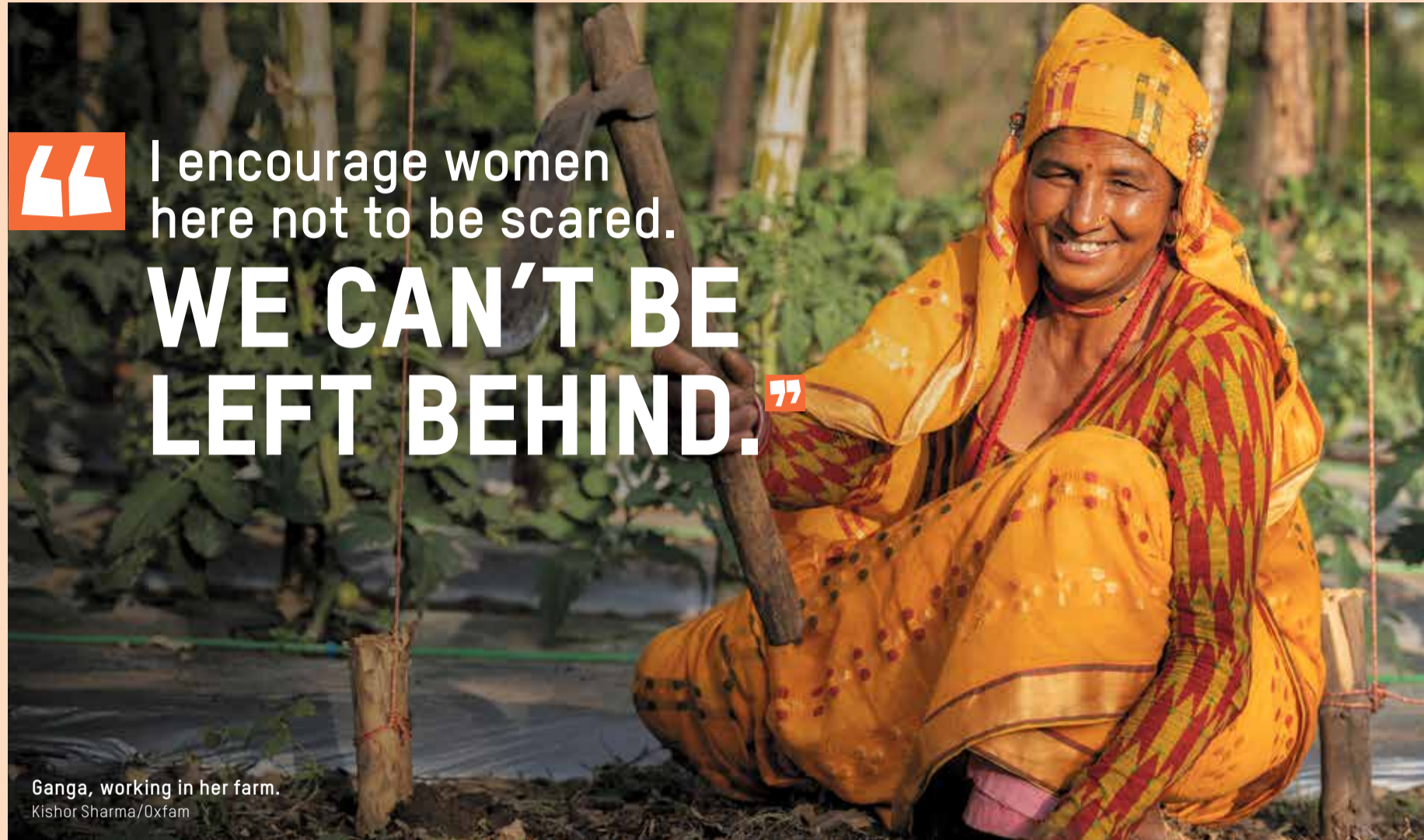
Globally, women do 75% of all unpaid care work without being fully valued for it, leaving them disadvantaged and less able to take paid work. Oxfam's WE-Care programme is a collaboration between some of our partners, working women, girls and men to level this inequality by reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work. Follow this link [oxfam.org.uk/voiceswecare](https://oxfam.org.uk/voiceswecare) or scan the code to learn more.



**GALS FORUM INTERNATIONAL**  
Gals Forum International fosters stable and economically empowered families by focusing on women and girls. They link them to vocational and business skills, mentoring and life skills. They're now mobilising communities in Eastern Uganda to engage in economic and environmental benefits as well.



While economic systems around the world rely on unpaid care work, people who care for others are more likely to live in poverty because of the time and work it takes. Ganga in Nepal and Clare in Wales share a day in their lives, and how caring fits into it.



Ganga, working in her farm.  
Kishor Sharma/Oxfam

“ I encourage women here not to be scared. **WE CAN'T BE LEFT BEHIND.** ”



Clare watering plants in her greenhouse.  
Nic Kane/Oxfam

“ My role feels vulnerable, my life **CONSTANTLY PRECARIOUS.** ”



### Ganga's story

My name is Ganga. I was born in a remote mountain village. When I got married, I gave birth to one boy and one girl, and I had to bring them up on my own and take care of my mother-in-law. My husband was working away from home, so I had to take responsibility. I was able to fund my kids' education with my farming. In those days, we had to pay fees in government schools.

I wake up early. I go to the washroom, and after that I go to my mother-in-law's room. I do my morning prayers and clean the house. I have two dogs and a cat who always

accompany me as friends. I make lunch for us and feed my mother-in-law. I feed the cows and do the chores. If there is a Farmer Field School (FFS) meeting then I head to it. Then, I come back home and see where my goats and cows are. I clean the house again and start preparing for dinner. I must work all day without a break.

We got involved in Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD) when the project came here. The women from the community initially doubted it. I had to give them more information. Later, they agreed

“Don't get shattered during tough times.”



### Clare's story

Becoming a carer meant adjusting to many financial, emotional and practical constraints. I have two autistic children, and my youngest has complex needs and finds most ordinary demands a challenge. When he stopped being able to go to school, we moved 300 miles to be closer to my parents for support. I am lucky, my husband works, but we have fallen into traditional roles where he earns and I do the caring.

My day starts very early. Sometimes, if my children are still asleep, I have a moment for the paperwork that punctuates the lives of families with

disabled children. I make breakfast the same way every day, at the same time. My children find change difficult, so predictable anchor points really help. My youngest struggles to leave the house, meaning we can be tied to home. During the day, I may manage an hour online with Mums4aChange, a social enterprise who support carers of children with additional needs. Here, I can connect with others who 'get it'.

“[My children] are empathetic, funny, honest and so creative.”

When evening arrives, we try to calm things enough to create space for sleep. This often involves stories and



Ganga, holding one of her goats.  
Kishor Sharma/Oxfam

and I got everyone together to have a meeting.

LI-BIRD gave us a lot of farming information. For example, not using poisonous pesticides or chemical fertilisers as they are very harmful to health. LI-BIRD helped us to develop organic fertilisers, and now we do not have to buy fertilisers or any kind of pesticides. The women who joined are happy being a part of the FFS group.

I encourage the women around here to not be scared. We can't be left behind. Don't get shattered during tough times and don't be too over ambitious during the good times. Try to stay calm and think everything through – we should try to think positively.



**LI-BIRD**  
Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD), is a Nepal-based partner organisation that's had recognition around the world for its community-focused environmental work and its farmer training. LI-BIRD runs Farmer Field Schools (FFS), sharing techniques and improving wheat varieties so the crop can adapt to climate change. They also support people to create strong policies and laws to protect farmers' rights.



Clare walking her dog.  
Nic Kane/Oxfam

gentle games together. I've learnt so much, watching my children navigate a world not built for them. They are empathetic, funny, honest and so creative. I've learned to be endlessly resourceful, fighting the system constantly so that my children can be included in ways other families might take for granted.

I'm aware of my privilege, but my life feels constantly precarious. The truth is carers like me save education, health and social care systems a great deal of money in the unpaid work we undertake. I have decided to share my life, so others feel less alone.



**CARING CRAFTIVISTS AND WE CARE**  
Clare started working with Oxfam through a grassroots, carer-run campaign, We Care, who partnered with Oxfam Cymru in a project called 'Caring Craftivists: Stitching Threads of Change.' The project aims to raise awareness of unpaid carers, and the value they bring to society, at the Welsh Senedd.




**IN CONVERSATION**

**Climate activism must be a beacon OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.**


The climate crisis is affecting all of us, but it's not affecting us equally. That's why it's so important that decision-making spaces like the yearly Conference of the Parties (COP) are places for all people's voices to be heard. As a young climate leader, activist Elizabeth Wathuti has been to several COPs, where she's campaigned alongside Oxfam for climate justice. Now, she's reflecting on her experience and what she'd like to see change to make events more inclusive.

**How did you find your very first COP experience?**

My experience as a newcomer was a rollercoaster, but it carries a message of hope, urgency, and human connection that we all need to embrace. This event was a whirlwind, but it taught me valuable lessons about the climate crisis and the huge value of every voice in and out of the room.

**Was there anything you found challenging?**

Climate discussions seemed like a secret code. Everyone spoke in complex terms and acronyms. I was eager to make a difference, but it felt like I needed a translator. Jargon and acronyms created barriers that kept many of us on the fringes. The same holds true for many young activists across Africa and the globe. Imagine being in a room filled with discussions about global temperature rise. It may sound daunting, but it's not just about numbers. It's about people.

**What would you like to see change?**

To bridge the gap, we must simplify our language. Climate change affects us all, and our conversations should

reflect that. Clear and accessible communication ensures that everyone's voice is heard, reminding us that this is a human issue. Climate activism must be a beacon of diversity and inclusion. The unique perspectives of young people from Africa – and beyond – enrich the movement. Our voices matter, and they add a human touch to the data and facts.

**Do you think aspects of your identity affected your COP experience?**

As a young woman from Kenya, my identity played a significant role in my first COP experience; at times, I felt like an outsider based on the conversations inside the rooms where key discussions were taking place. The conversations were so disconnected from the realities that I have seen and felt on the ground. Unfortunately, this is a shared experience among many young climate activists worldwide.

**Were there positives you could take away?**

Despite the challenges, I found solace in networking and attending side events. Through these connections,



Climate activist Elizabeth Wathuti campaigned for the Loss and Damage fund at COP 27, alongside Oxfam, after witnessing how drought affected Wajir County, Kenya. Sommie's Photography/Oxfam

I realised I wasn't alone in my feelings of overwhelm. Young activists from diverse backgrounds shared my passion for change. The urgency of climate action binds us together. We must actively seek these opportunities for connection because it's through collective action that we'll make a real impact.

**What would you like to tell our supporters?**

Believe in yourself and the power of your voice to make meaningful change. Together, we can create an inclusive and effective movement. Remember that the climate crisis is not just about policies; it's about people. It's about us. We have a collective responsibility to take action. Let's embrace our shared humanity and work together to create a sustainable future.

**USE YOUR VOICE! ASK FOR A MORE EQUAL WORLD**

A more equal world isn't just possible – it's essential. If you agree, add your voice to ours and join our campaign for equality for everyone. Follow this link [oxfam.org.uk/voicescampaign](https://oxfam.org.uk/voicescampaign) or scan the code.



Marian, working in Carusel, the Bucharest-based NGO he co-founded and manages. Pablo Tosco/Oxfam


**Our collaboration is built on respect and equal PARTNERSHIP.**


**Marian, who is of Roma ethnicity, is director and co-founder of Oxfam partner Carusel. Based in Bucharest, Carusel focuses on supporting groups of people who are marginalised, including those with Roma heritage, chronic diseases, disabilities or people experiencing homelessness.**

**Following the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Carusel has also become a shelter for people fleeing the violence. Now, Marian is supporting people with complex needs, while the shelter has been renovated for people to live there in the longer term.**

Since the start of the conflict in Ukraine, 8 million people have fled, seeking safety in other countries across Europe. But when war breaks out, it's often most dangerous for groups of people who are already experiencing extreme vulnerability.

When Marian first founded Carusel, his Roma roots were an important part of his wish for it to be a warm and welcoming environment for everyone staying there. While initially set up as a shelter for people in the short term, Carusel has since been converted to support up to 40 people escaping conflict in Ukraine.

For people who've lost their homes through war, it can be really healing to have more of a say over their day-to-day lives. Because of this, Carusel is run collaboratively by the people living there, as well as its staff. Residents can choose their roles and responsibilities, from keeping the place clean, to buying food and other essentials. While one meal a day is

Alongside our partners, Oxfam has supported 1.88 million people affected by conflict in Ukraine with:

-  SAFE, SECURE AND DIGNIFIED HOUSING
-  BASIC AND SPECIALISED SERVICES
-  CASH ASSISTANCE
-  ACCESS TO INFORMATION

provided, the rest are cooked together by the people living in the shelter. Marian explains, "We try to educate and strengthen people to build their own networks and take decisions on their future."

Marian worked with Oxfam to renovate the shelter, and help provide funding for everything the residents need to be happy and comfortable. He says, "We've built the response together. Our collaboration is founded on respect and equal partnership. On our side, we brought our experience and skills on how to build and run a decent and safe shelter, and our knowledge of the local area and relationship with the local authorities. Oxfam supported us with training, increasing our [shelter] capacity, and listening to what we need."

**CARUSEL**  
Carusel is a human rights organisation, dedicated to ensuring that the people who need help the most receive immediate and long-term support. Beyond the shelter, they have a mobile unit of staff who visit refugees living in private accommodation and help them to access support services.



Huwaida is a humanitarian worker who is employed by Oxfam's partner The Culture and Free Thought Association. Marwan Sawwaf/Alef MultiMedia/Oxfam

“ I wish I had  
THE TIME  
TO GRIEVE. ”

Huwaida works for Oxfam partner, The Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA). Like almost 2 million Gazans, Huwaida was forced to evacuate her home, after Israeli warplanes distributed leaflets telling residents to seek refuge in the south. Now, she's sheltering in the centre she used to work at, tending to 300 men, women and children who have also fled there. This is her story.



Huwaida putting her grandson to sleep in the CFTA office. Marwan Sawwaf/Alef MultiMedia/Oxfam

My name is Huwaida. I am a widow and have three sons and two daughters. I work as a Case Manager at the CFTA, which provides humanitarian support.

#### Evacuating the city

[On October 14], we woke up to the sounds of explosions around our house. It became perilous to stay. After seven days of the war, we received leaflets instructing us to leave and head south by 2:00 PM. Panic engulfed us. I reached out to acquaintances to find a place in the south, given my work there. The director of the centre where I work contacted me, advising my family to come to the centre in the hope that it would be safer there.

When we attempted to leave, we couldn't find any available transportation. I reached out to my brothers. [One of my brothers] began transporting our family members in groups, dropping them off at the beach before returning for the next group. We were a group of 50, walking along the shoreline, which included pregnant women, mothers with newborns, elders and those suffering from chronic illnesses. Despite ongoing bombings, we continued our journey along the sea.

#### Setting up the shelter

When we arrived [at the centre], we had no bedding. Initially, we believed we would stay for just one night. We slept on the floor during the first two days,

using towels and clothes as makeshift beds. We anxiously waited for news from Gaza City. After our departure, our homes were bombed, and we feared for the people who stayed behind.

We set it up as a shelter that could accommodate 300 people. The next morning, I wondered what the people here would have to eat and drink. We supported each other by contributing efforts, skills, and money. We relied on a form of social solidarity. We prepared food for everyone here. We attempted to cater to the needs of individuals with chronic illnesses and children.

Even though we try to help each other, and even though I belong to this place, I feel like a stranger and want to return to my home. We are displaced and living this experience, and despite our solidarity, it is a hard experience.

#### No place is safe here

We were trying to find safety, but today even the south is not safe. No place is safe here. Today, bombing is everywhere. When our children drink water or go to the bathroom, we fear they will not return from where they went.

What is happening in Gaza today is worse than any other world war that has ever happened. Our children today do not talk about war and fear. My daughter, who is 13 years old, screamed at night because her friend was killed in Gaza City, and she blamed me, because we should have stayed in Gaza City and died together, rather than suffer all this grief for our neighbours and friends.

[Our organisation does] a lot of training and awareness raising on dealing with emergencies and crises, but nothing we discussed is similar to what is happening today. What happened this time is beyond any expectations, beyond anything that can be taught, beyond any experience, and beyond any emergency plan. We try as much as possible to share the simple knowledge and skills that we have with the residents here, so that even if we died for some reason, someone else will be able to manage the place.

#### Grieving loved ones

There is no safety for a child or an adult, so everyone thinks about how they can spread out. In the morning, my younger sister's children were writing their names on their hands. They say they have seen on social media that children are identified by the names written on their hands, so they will write their names because they are afraid that no one will recognize their bodies.



Huwaida hugging her daughter. Marwan Sawwaf/Alef MultiMedia/Oxfam

I was talking to one of my colleagues, and he told me he found his daughter's hand then her foot. Another colleague of mine who worked with us in an art workshop was killed. I feel a pain in my heart whenever I pass by his workshop.

“There is no safety for a child or an adult.”

I wish I had time to grieve for the people I love who are gone. I can't find time to be sad. I try to work all day on providing water, electricity, people, and necessities to keep myself busy and not to think and mourn for the people who are gone.

#### OXFAM AND GAZA RESPONSE

Since the start of the conflict, more than 270,000 Oxfam supporters and the global community have signed our ceasefire petition. We're working with 13 partners to provide assistance and support. For more information, please visit: [oxfam.org.uk/voicesgaza](https://oxfam.org.uk/voicesgaza)



**THE CULTURE AND FREE THOUGHT ASSOCIATION**  
The Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA) is an Oxfam partner and one of the biggest networks of human rights organisations in Gaza. The CFTA was founded in 1991 to provide humanitarian assistance in emergencies. Now, for over 30 years it has worked in the middle and southern areas of Gaza providing safe and supportive spaces for communities to learn and connect with each other.



## “Oxfam has always been part of our worldview.”

Colin and Sue are long-term supporters of Oxfam who have retired to live in Wales after careers in teaching. As life-long advocates for a more equal world, Colin and Sue are staying in the fight and leaving a gift in their Will to Oxfam.

### A career in teaching and volunteering

After completing teacher training in London, my wife Sue and I were Voluntary Service Overseas volunteers in Tunisia. We were engaged at the time. Now, we're both over 70 and largely retired. I still do visiting lectures in Poland. I am lecturing in the art of argument. Listening carefully to different points of view is how healthy debates start.

### Volunteering with Oxfam

Oxfam has always been a part of our worldview. Sue and I have volunteered at Oxfam shops for a lot of our lives, starting back in the late 1960s. It was in the 80s, I think, that we made our first monthly donation to Oxfam, and we've been doing the same ever since.

### A new life in Wales

We are in North Wales, on the edge of Snowdonia. Our sons are also here in Snowdonia. I was always inspired by Gandhi's slogan 'live simply so that others may simply live'. We live in a simple, cosy cottage, nothing wasted. I go out for walks daily in the hills and drive as little as I can.



Colin and Sue walking near their home in Wales.  
Abbie Trayler-Smith/Oxfam

**“We should: ‘live simply so that others may simply live.’”**

### Finding second-hand treasure

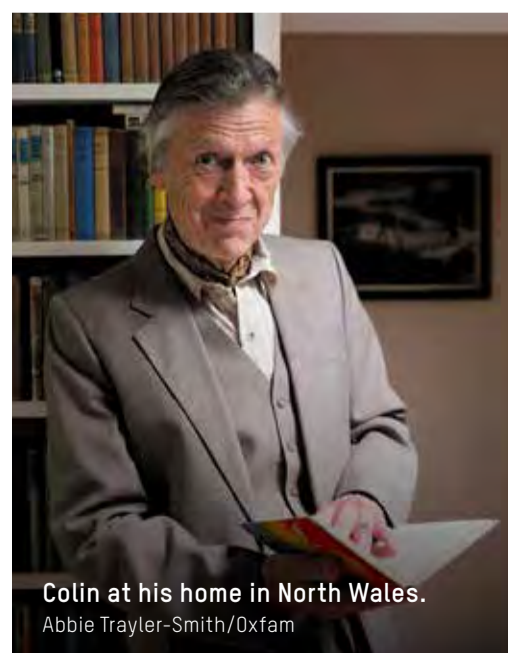
Much of what I wear has been from Oxfam shops, sometimes I think I have been following around someone who is my own size. I have found some nicely tailored jackets in Oxfam, so why would we go elsewhere? Most of our Christmas presents have come from an Oxfam shop.

### Sharing values with Oxfam

We have always been impressed by Oxfam laying great stress on the provision of water resources because there is nothing more fundamental in this world than access to fresh water. It had long been our intention to leave a substantial portion of our estate to the four charities we donate to each month. It is more important than ever to support organisations like Oxfam.

### 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](https://oxfam.org.uk/voicesgiftinwill)



Colin at his home in North Wales.  
Abbie Trayler-Smith/Oxfam



Colin has bought many clothes from Oxfam over the years.  
Abbie Trayler-Smith/Oxfam



Seema is holding the 'Solidarity' bracelet from our Wonderful Work of Women's range. You can shop the range instore and online using the QR code below.  
Ravi Munday

## “Men and women are equal and should have the same rights.”

Seema is an artisan and mother, who works with our partner Tara, a Fair Trade jewellery organisation in India, whose products you can find in the Sourced By Oxfam range in our shops. She told us about how she found out about Tara and how important fairly paid work is for equality.

Originally, I am from the village Gopeshar, in Uttarakhand state. I got married at the age of 18 in a nearby village, and lived there with my husband and his family. My husband had no work in the village so we moved to Delhi. I was moving around and working in lots of different places – it was very difficult.

I heard about Tara from some friends. I came here and asked about work. Now, I've been working here for over 15 years. I am very happy that I could come to Tara. Here, I found out about fair trade, and that men and women are equal and should have the same rights. I also became more aware of the environment and that we should avoid using plastic. The glass beads we use come from a village, where they are handmade by other artisans.

I'm happy that we work together. It's like a family. My life is more stable now. In the last couple of years, I've been able to support my children. It's important that everybody gets good work to live a better life.



Oxfam volunteer Mahiro sorts through Sourced by Oxfam cards in her local shop.  
Gabi Torres/Oxfam

## “I'm a chatty person! I love talking to people.”

When Mahiro moved to London, she began volunteering in her local Oxfam shop, meeting her local community. Here's what she enjoys most...

### What made you want to volunteer?

I wanted to communicate and work with other volunteers. I volunteered when I lived in Japan, and wanted to compare the differences between the two countries. When I walked around London I saw Oxfam volunteers and became interested.

### What do you enjoy about volunteering?

I love interacting with customers. I'm a chatty person! I love talking to people. I am really enjoying volunteering with my manager, my deputy manager and all of the staff. The atmosphere is amazing!

### What would you like others to know about volunteering?

I was really glad to be accepted for this volunteer position. You don't need volunteering experience or retail experience. All the information about volunteering is available on the Oxfam website.

### FIND YOUR NEAREST OXFAM SHOP

Whether you're looking for Fair Trade treats or second-hand treasure, or fancy becoming a volunteer, find your nearest shop today. Scan here or visit our website now: [oxfam.org.uk/voicesshops](https://oxfam.org.uk/voicesshops)







Ángel, working as a beekeeper and forest-restorer in the Amazonian rainforest, Bolivia.  
Samuel Nacar/Oxfam Intermón

**“ BY WORKING TOGETHER you can get what you want.”**

When Ángel's family first moved to Medio Monte, Bolivia, the surrounding area was completely deforested by livestock production companies, with only two mango trees left standing. His parents were supported with reforestation training from Oxfam Intermón, while he set up his own youth group: the Association of Young Reforesters in Action, AJORA.

Through AJORA, Ángel is fighting inequality by providing young people with local jobs so they don't have to move to find work in cities. He says, "By working together you can get what you want, always taking care of the climate. My dream is for AJORA to continue growing, encouraging young people to stop migrating to the city."



**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)

