

OXFAM CLOSEUP

WINTER 2015

THE DEFENDERS

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- > KEEPING AN EYE ON THE 'BIG 10'
- > FACING DOWN EBOLA
- > WHAT'S THE BEST RICE?

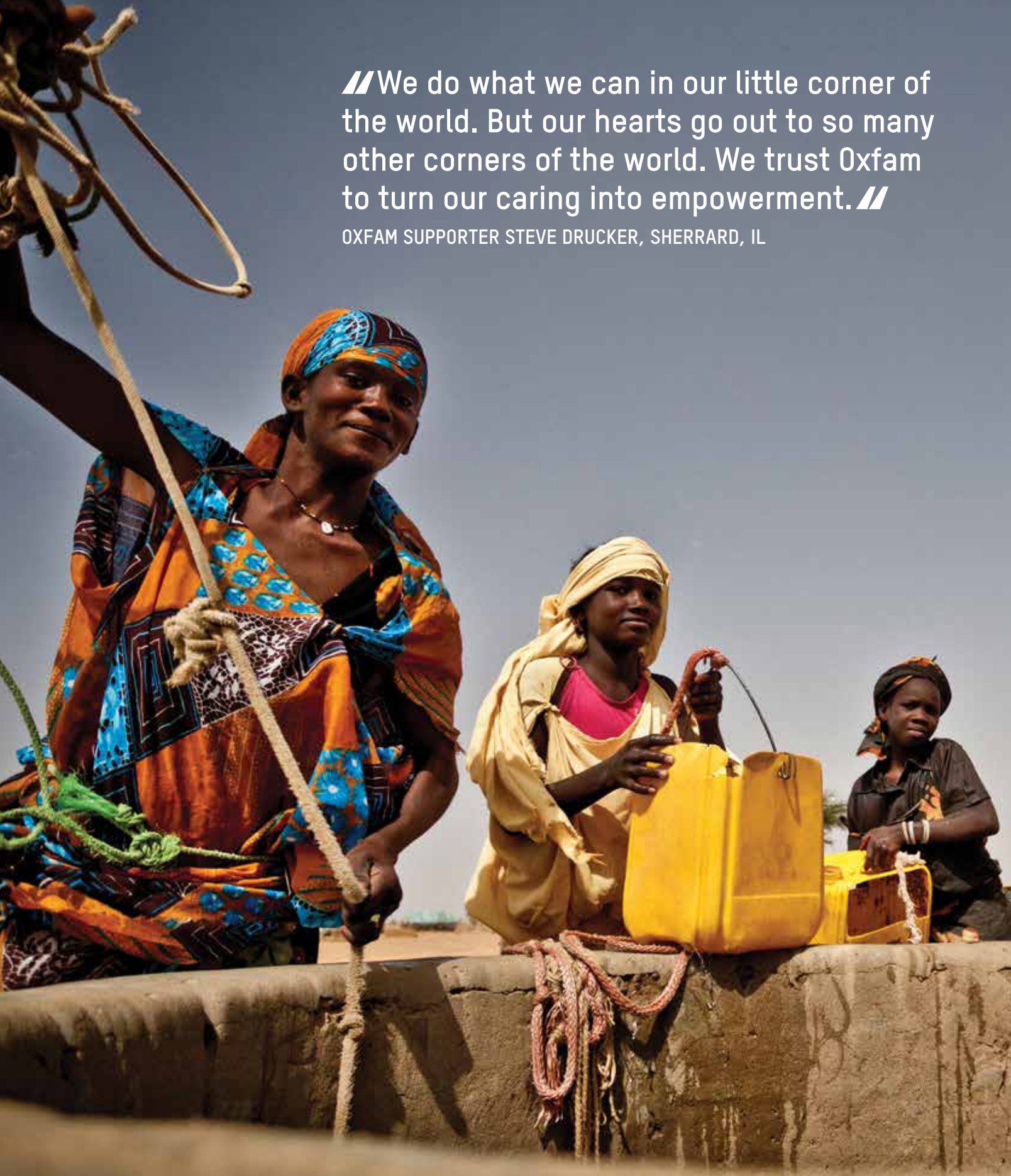
Si la VIDA!
NO A LA MINERÍA



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America

“We do what we can in our little corner of the world. But our hearts go out to so many other corners of the world. We trust Oxfam to turn our caring into empowerment.”

OXFAM SUPPORTER STEVE DRUCKER, SHERRARD, IL



THIS YEAR, BE PART OF A GLOBAL COMMUNITY. RENEW YOUR OXFAM AMERICA MEMBERSHIP FOR 2015, OR SIGN UP TO BECOME A MEMBER TODAY, AT OXFAMAMERICA.ORG/RENEW.

ABOVE: Fatimata Awade, left, and other local women draw water from a community well in Natriguel, Mauritania. Pablo Tosco / Oxfam

DEAR FRIENDS,

Many of us won't easily forget 2014, a year marked by grave challenges for millions of people around the world: the outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus in West Africa; a severe food crisis in South Sudan; the suffering of countless Syrian families, both inside and outside their conflict-ravaged country. These crises will continue to demand our attention as 2015 unfolds.

But the arrival of a new year is a time for us to feel emboldened by the change that is possible—if we commit ourselves deeply to tackling the challenges ahead and standing together against injustice. That's why I feel so inspired by a trio of human rights defenders in Guatemala whose bravery you'll read about on page 8. Together with their communities they are standing firm against repressive government tactics intended, they believe, to silence their objections to the proposed expansion of a silver mine that could threaten their way of life.

At stake is about \$1.5 billion worth of silver for the mine owners—millions of which will be shared with the Guatemalan government—versus the priceless right of citizens to have a say in major development decisions that could affect their livelihoods. It's a David-and-Goliath struggle, one that speaks to the strength of individual voices joining together to hold the powerful accountable.

Though the work of these citizen activists began in recent years, the beliefs that drive them are long-held. "We have to fight for the truth," says Teresa Muñoz, who grew up on the steep hillsides near the mine. "I know I have to defend what I love, and what I love is life and nature."

In 2015, my hope is that all of us can tap such deep wells of commitment. Change in our world depends on it.

Sincerely,



Raymond C. Offenheiser
President, Oxfam America

OXFAM CLOSEUP

OXFAM AMERICA'S MEMBER MAGAZINE

WINTER 2015 VOLUME 15, ISSUE 1

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COVER: Teresa Muñoz has been a speaker at many events mobilizing people to block the expansion of a silver mine in Guatemala. *James Rodríguez / Oxfam America*

We welcome your feedback. Please direct letters to editor@oxfamamerica.org.

MEDIA MASHUP

LOOK. WATCH. LISTEN. JOIN THE CONVERSATION.

FROM THE BLOGS

WHAT'S REALLY GOING TO END POVERTY?

By Chris Hufstader | Dec. 26, 2014

Here at Oxfam we have a theory: We can't defeat poverty unless we address the way power works. Ultimately, those in power need to use the government to serve the citizens, and society needs a clear pathway to holding those in power accountable. The protests in Hong Kong are an example of what people can resort to when the path to the voting booth is blocked. But other movements like Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring, and the protests we are now seeing in the US are all about injustices and unaccountable power.

Helping people push their elected leaders to protect their environment and livelihood is just as important as food aid, building schools, and supplying clean water.

Read the rest of this blog at oxfamamerica.org/theory.

RIGHT: Indigenous people march on Human Rights Day in Cambodia. Savann Oeum / Oxfam America



WATCH ►

EBOLA QUARANTINES

Efforts to contain the spread of Ebola through poorly implemented quarantines in Sierra Leone have caused unnecessary hardship and threaten to spread the disease further. Watch *Ebola: From the Other Side of the String* at oxfamamerica.org/other side.

IN THE NEWS

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

In the *Wall Street Journal's* Indonesia Realtime blog, Shannon Scribner, Oxfam America's humanitarian policy manager, spoke to a reporter for a Nov. 6, 2014, piece about the impact of climate change on Asia. "Growth in Asia has been at the heart of recent declines in hunger and poverty, but climate change threatens to stop this growth in its tracks," she said. "Governments have a chance to head off some of the most devastating costs of increasingly extreme disasters, but that will require steps to boost preparedness now."

/// What I saw on my three trips through South Sudan were people just like you and me. People with desires and needs. People in love. Mothers and fathers. Sisters and brothers. Friends and enemies. People with resilience, determination. But above all—hope. ///

Oxfam America Celebrity Ambassador Rooney Mara writing for CNN Opinion on Dec. 15, 2014, following her most recent trip to South Sudan



AN END TO EXTREME INEQUALITY

WHY CAN'T HARDWORKING PEOPLE ADVANCE OUT OF POVERTY? THE RIGGED RULES OF OUR GLOBAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM HOLD OUR ECONOMY BACK, AND DENY OPPORTUNITIES TO THOSE WORKING HARD TO GET AHEAD.

BY CHRIS HUFSTADER

Everyone should be able to earn enough to provide for their family, save for the future, and have a fair chance to get ahead if they work hard and make sacrifices. But many hard-working people struggle just to make ends meet. They are finding it nearly impossible to escape poverty, and the gap between rich and poor is growing wider.

In fact, decades of government deregulation and bad political choices have concentrated more and more wealth into the hands of just a few people: In 1983, an average CEO in the US earned about 40 times as much as an average worker in his or her company; now it is 331 times as much. Today, Oxfam estimates the richest 85 people in the world have the same wealth as half the people on the planet. Globally, seven out of 10 of us live in countries where the gap between rich and poor is greater than it was 30 years ago.

This increasing inequality hinders economic growth here in the US and in

many other countries. It's the result of a skewed economic and political system that favors the few at the expense of everyone else, and it's not good for the global economy, according to many economists. "The extreme inequalities in incomes and assets we see in much of the world today harms our economies, our societies, and undermines our politics," says Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize-winning economist from Columbia University. "It is of course the poorest who suffer most, experiencing not just vastly unequal outcomes in their lives, but vastly unequal opportunities too."

Oxfam is proposing sensible political and economic reforms that can level the playing field in any country:

An increase in the US federal minimum wage to \$10.10: This would give about 25 million US workers a raise, lift millions out of poverty, save US taxpayers billions by decreasing the need for public assistance, and boost economic recovery.

Close tax loopholes: All countries need money to fund schools, hospitals, and

build roads. They need fair and effective tax systems so individuals and corporations pay their fair share.

Use oil, gas, and mining revenue for fighting poverty: Countries rich in natural resources should use more of their wealth to reduce poverty. We need to require companies to disclose what they pay governments, so citizens can see how these revenues are spent.

Lift up the voices of the people who drive our economy: We need to help the hardworking people who drive our economy speak out so policy makers, decision makers, and elected representatives hear them.

WATCH AND SHARE

Here's what you can do: Visit oxfamamerica.org/evenitup, check out the video about inequality, and share it with your friends, so more of us are aware of extreme inequality.

ABOVE: A shantytown in São Paulo, Brazil, borders the much more affluent Morumbi district. *Tuca Vieira / Oxfam*

EBOLA AT THEIR DOORSTEP

IN WEST AFRICA, **ELIZABETH STEVENS** REPORTS ON HOW AN OXFAM SAVING FOR CHANGE PROGRAM IS HELPING BORDER COMMUNITIES FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE DEADLY VIRUS WITH KNOWLEDGE AND UNITY.

Dindefelo is a village in Senegal. It sits in Kédougou, the southeastern region of the country where flat grassland and forest meet the foothills of the Fouta Djallon mountain range. There is gold in these mountains, but local people have little to show for it, and the region remains one of Senegal's very poorest. It is currently also one of its most dangerous, because Kédougou shares a border with Guinea, a country struggling with the Ebola epidemic.

Oxfam is working in Ebola hotspots like Liberia and Sierra Leone, making sure communities know how to protect themselves and respond safely to suspected cases, and supporting medical centers with clean water, sanitation, and other

services. We are also working in at-risk countries like Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, boosting awareness and preparedness through our work with governments, partners, and communities. And as the crisis sends economic shock waves across the region, an Oxfam savings and lending program known as Saving for Change is demonstrating how women in towns like Dindefelo can transform modest savings into a precious commodity in this emergency: resilience.

A PERFECT STORM

Dindefelo lies close to the border with Guinea—eight miles past the last border checkpoint. No Ebola has been detected in the village, but the people who live there can't forget for a moment that a Guinean friend or relative who comes for a visit or a stranger who drifts into town could be carrying the virus.

"People here are afraid," says Kikalo Diallo, the village chief. "They are very, very scared of Ebola." They are also struggling to make ends meet.

The government's strategy for keeping the epidemic at bay has been to close the border. Hoping to discourage Guinean traders and miners from crossing over illegally, the government has also shut-

tered Kédougou's regional markets and extended a closure of the region's gold mines. The wildlife and natural beauty of this area used to draw ecotourists, but tourism has been hit hard by the Ebola crisis. So, at a time when market disruptions and a poor harvest are driving up the cost of goods, incomes are plummeting.

STAYING AFLOAT

The village is a quiet place. There are more goats and cows in the road than cars or motorbikes, so when 20 women erupt in laughter, they make themselves heard.

This is the sound of a Saving for Change group in action.

If fear stalks the lives of these women, you wouldn't know it here. They are confident, and it shows in how they look and talk and share a joke. Gathered in a circle under the shade of woven reeds, they conduct a weekly ritual, reciting aloud the name of their group—Unity—and the rules that make it work. Each member hands over her weekly savings—250 West African francs, or 45 cents—and from their accumulated funds they issue short-term loans.

The sums are small, but the results of this process have been life-changing: by saving and investing money, these





**//WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT EBOLA,
BUT WE ARE GOING ABOUT OUR LIVES.
WE ARE VIGILANT, BUT WE ARE CALM. //**

SAFOURATOU DIALLO

women have been able to step out of their confining and unpaid roles in the home to become successful traders. The group has helped them weather storms, they say, including medical emergencies and sudden financial downturns. And in the Ebola crisis, it is helping them stay afloat.

"My husband is a guide for tourists. Since tourists are not coming, I am taking care of our expenses," says trader Kadiatou Traore, who is president of the savings group. "Now that the border and the regional market are closed, our incomes are reduced, but we can rely

on the group for credit to take care of urgent problems."

THE POWER TO SAVE LIVES

While Oxfam is helping the government's Ebola education efforts through posters and radio, our partner La Lumière is reinforcing prevention messages by offering trainings to all 600 Saving for Change groups in Senegal.

"When you participate in a funeral, it is dangerous!" Modou Goumbala of La Lumière tells a group in a nearby village. He sweeps around the circle of women, making sure everyone understands the basics about Ebola detection and prevention, interspersing admonitions with theatrics and humor.

The women will engage their communities and networks to spread the word, but they'll manage it in their own way: no one tells a Saving for Change group what to do.

"There are a lot of ways that women can share information about Ebola," says trader Adama Djire. "We go to many ceremonies and meetings, and we interact with people in the market."

In the face of Ebola, towns like Dindéfelo are neither safe nor helpless. As

of this writing, there is no Ebola in this village, but if a case emerges here, the knowledge and relationships that savings group members have built may help protect lives in their communities. In the meantime, says member Safouratou Diallo, people are going about their business. "We are vigilant," she says, "but we are calm."

Editor's note: As this magazine went to print, the government of Senegal reopened its land border with Guinea.

A CLOSER LOOK Q

Find stories and video about Oxfam's Ebola programs in hard-hit West Africa at oxfamamerica.org/ebola.

WHAT'S WRONG?

When Ebola struck Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, lack of knowledge about the disease led to disastrous outcomes.

WHAT'S OXFAM DOING?

Oxfam and our partners are helping hundreds of local outreach workers provide vulnerable communities with the information they need to stay safe and halt the spread of the disease.

Right the Wrong

ABOVE: For residents of Dindéfelo, the nearby hills of Guinea are a constant reminder of Ebola. But women like Safouratou Diallo say savings groups are helping address the worry and hardship brought on by the crisis.

Elizabeth Stevens / Oxfam America

OPPOSITE: "Don't touch a person who died of Ebola," warns Modou Goumbala of Oxfam partner La Lumière. La Lumière is training Saving for Change groups in Senegal on how to prevent the spread of the disease.

Hans Komla Masro / Oxfam America

EVERYBODY'S WATCHING

ANNA KRAMER REPORTS ON HOW OXFAM'S BEHIND THE BRANDS CAMPAIGN IS KEEPING THE PRESSURE ON LARGE FOOD COMPANIES TO DO MORE FOR PEOPLE AND OUR PLANET.

It's not every day that one of the world's biggest food companies makes a public commitment to address climate change and support small-scale farmers worldwide. So when Oxfam America posted this news about Kellogg to Facebook on Aug. 13, the response was big. Congratulations flowed in—along with a bit of skepticism: “Bull---! I’m so sick of big companies pretending to be something they’re not!” wrote one commenter.

WHAT'S WRONG?

Ten influential food and beverage companies control most of the products in the grocery store, making those companies major players in our global food system. But they don't always do business in a way that benefits poor people or the planet.

WHAT'S OXFAM DOING?

Oxfam's Behind the Brands campaign takes a closer look at the “big 10” food companies' policies and, when needed, harnesses the power of consumer action to persuade those companies to do better. The campaign also monitors these companies to make sure they honor their commitments.

Right the Wrong

She had good reason to be skeptical. Most of us are familiar with green-washing. We've heard companies make vague-sounding promises that they probably don't intend to keep. But the goal of Behind the Brands, Oxfam's campaign to transform the food and beverage industry, is to make sure these companies' promises actually become reality.

Launched in 2013, Behind the Brands takes a close look at the policies of the world's 10 biggest food and beverage companies, encourages them to do more for people and the planet, and, when needed, harnesses the power of consumer action to persuade them to do better. More than 250,000 people have joined the campaign. Together, we persuaded companies including Nestlé, Coca-Cola, and Kellogg to agree to improve their policies on issues like land grabs and fair wages for cocoa farmers—campaign victories covered everywhere from National Public Radio to *USA Today*.

“Behind the Brands is a cutting-edge effort to evaluate food and beverage companies ... along a range of common factors: the environment, land, human rights. It is, in some ways, the future,” said Michael Posner, a professor at New York University's Stern School of Business who studies the links between the private sector and human rights issues. “It's an exemplar of what needs to be done in every industry.”

But what happens after a company makes public commitments to do better? What guarantees do we have that these powerful corporate giants will actually keep their promises?

Irit Tamir, senior adviser for Behind the Brands, said that Oxfam first works with companies to make recommendations for how these commitments should be carried out. All policy changes should be specific, provable, and designed to help people living in poverty: for example, setting a five-year goal to increase the number of women members of cocoa-growing cooperatives in Ivory Coast.

Then, the campaign holds companies to their word by making their actions public and accessible to everyone, publishing “roadmaps” on the Behind the Brands website to indicate exactly which steps companies have taken and when. Tamir and other experts also post periodic blogs analyzing companies' progress. “It's about letting the companies know that everybody is watching, to make sure they stick to what they said they'd do,” said Tamir.

Rank	Company	Score	Land	Women	Farmers
=1	Nestlé	70%	7	5	7
=1	Unilever	70%	7	6	8
3	Coca-Cola	59%	8	6	2
4	PEPSICO	44%	7	2	3
5	Mondelēz International	34%	3	5	4
=6	DANONE	31%	1	1	2
=6	MARS	31%	1	4	4
=6	Kellogg				



If these analyses were to find that a company is truly falling short, she said, Behind the Brands would then turn to the campaign's hundreds of thousands of supporters, whose voices are a powerful motivator for companies to keep their word.

An evaluation released in October 2014 found that, while Mars and Nestlé have kept some of their commitments, they can and should be doing more to fulfill their promises to women cocoa farmers and workers. Oxfam will be keeping a close eye on their progress in the months ahead, and, if need be, will call on people like you to help hold them accountable. After all, "these companies' brands are hugely visible, and

hugely susceptible to what customers think about them," said Tamir.

And consumers are not the only ones nudging these food giants to make progress. "There are also real champions within these companies who want to see their industry be more ethical and sustainable," noted Tamir, such as corporate social responsibility teams.

So what does all of this add up to? Because these companies are so influential, any shift in their policies could potentially help huge numbers of people. But the real-word effects of these changes—diffused through chains of suppliers and traders—are not easy to quantify.

"It's a very important first step for companies to say, these are our environmental policies, our land policies, our human rights policies," said Posner. "But the next phase is to figure out, do those words have meaning, and how will they be carried out?"

To do that, Behind the Brands will keep pushing companies to assess their impact on communities, publish the results, and prove they are having a real effect on people's lives. It may not be a quick or simple process. But, as another commenter wrote on Facebook about the Kellogg news, even a first step is still a step forward. "As long as companies are held accountable, then I say way to go," she wrote. "It's long overdue."

A CLOSER LOOK Q

Learn more about how you persuaded companies to act, and find out where they stand as of now at oxfamamerica.org/big10.

Workers	Climate	Transparency	Water	Total
7	9	7	7	49/70
8	7	7	6	49/70
7	7	5	6	41/70
3	6	5	5	31/70
3	3	3	3	24/70
3	5	5	5	22/70
4	4	3	2	23/70

ABOVE: Oxfam activist Sarah Kalloch participated in a stunt in Chicago in May 2014. *Elena Bazini / Oxfam America*

LEFT: Oxfam's Behind the Brands scorecard, last updated in fall 2014, ranks the policies of the world's biggest food companies.



'WE ARE STAYING STRONG IN THIS STRUGGLE'

A CAMPAIGN OF INTIMIDATION AIMS TO SILENCE CRITICS OF A \$1.5 BILLION MINING OPERATION IN GUATEMALA. BUT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ARE DETERMINED TO SPEAK OUT, AND OXFAM IS THERE TO HELP THEM. CHRIS HUFSTADER REPORTS.

Hugo Loy, a doctor and the mayor of Matequesucintla in southern Guatemala, remembers well the day the army arrived in his town.

"On May 2nd, 2013, there was a state of siege imposed here," he says, speaking slowly at first, then picking up speed as the details spill out. "Thousands of soldiers, hundreds of police, a military arsenal with tanks and bazookas."

A community of farmers determined to protect their land and water, Matequesucintla had recently voted—overwhelmingly—to ban mining, says Loy.

Their goal was to block the expansion of a silver mine already established in a nearby area called San Rafael Las Flores and to prevent it from threatening the environment.

The government's three-week military occupation had one purpose says Loy: "To silence us."

REPRESSION AND 'CRIMINALIZATION'

Tahoe Resources, a US company, holds majority ownership of the silver mine. GoldCorp, a Canadian company, is also a part owner. The mine was established

in San Rafael Las Flores in 2013 despite opposition from farmers there, who are concerned a mine will deplete their water sources and displace them from their land. Currently, the company is operating in a small area, mining mostly underground. Its declared intent is to expand and produce 20 million ounces of silver over a 10-year period, which makes the operation worth \$1.5 billion. Many millions will go to the government of Guatemala and to the Guatemalan mining company running the day-to-day operations.

Critics of the mine say it was first established without any discussion with

local people, which violates their right to be consulted about major development decisions that could affect their lives and livelihoods. This right to be consulted is well established for indigenous people under international law, and is an emerging standard in cases where anyone could be affected by a project like a silver mine. The proposed expansion, which could take up as many as 2,000 square kilometers (about 800 square miles) also requires consultation with local communities, but those demanding it are being persecuted by the government for speaking out against the mine.

Individuals have paid a heavy price for their opposition. "The people of San Rafael Las Flores have had to learn to live in a tense climate in which human rights defenders have had their own rights violated," says Yuri Melini, a doctor who, in 2000, founded the Guatemalan human rights organization Center for Legal, Environmental, and Social Action (known by its Spanish initials CALAS). "They have been put in prison, slandered, black-listed, or unjustly prosecuted."

Melini says this tactic of framing innocent people to silence them—and to intimidate others—has a name in Guatemala: criminalization.

FALSE CHARGES

When Tahoe Resources first came to San Rafael Las Flores, local farmers requested a vote on whether they should allow the mine to operate there. But in 2013 the mayor in the town sided with the mining company, and refused to hold any official referendum. Local activists held a number of informal "good faith consultations," in which 98 percent of voters cast a ballot against mining. Despite this opposition, the national government issued a mining permit, and when local people objected, the government imposed the state of siege.

Starting at about the time of this state of siege, a special organized crime task force got a judge to issue arrest warrants for 17 individuals in the area



near the Tahoe mine. The government accused these people of a long list of felonies, including attempted kidnapping, attempted arson, attempted murder, and resisting arrest. The 17 were all outspoken critics of the mine and its proposed expansion. An investigation by CALAS showed they were all innocent of the alleged crimes, but it took months for the authorities to drop the charges.

Oxfam is working with CALAS and other organizations in Guatemala to set the record straight. It's part of Oxfam's global program to help people defend their rights to be consulted about oil, gas, and mining projects, and to push governments to respect the rights of people to speak out and to protect the environment on which their livelihoods depend. In Guatemala there are currently multiple cases of mines affecting farmers and indigenous communities.

The Tahoe mine case is urgent: there is potential for conflict, and the right of local farmers to make a decent living is at risk.

Derided as criminals by their government, Guatemalans have a proud name for the brave activists whose stories you'll read on the following pages: human rights defenders. >

WHAT'S WRONG?

A silver mine established without the consent of local people wants to expand to cover 2,000 square kilometers, and local farmers are concerned about fragile water supplies and other environmental problems. Opponents of the mine who have spoken out publicly have been falsely charged with violent crimes, and have been arrested or forced to go into hiding.

WHAT'S OXFAM DOING?

Oxfam and our partners in Guatemala are helping human rights defenders to assert their right to speak out, while also pushing the mining company and government to respect the right of local people to be consulted about the establishment and proposed expansion of mines in Guatemala.

Right the Wrong

ABOVE: Citizens of San Juan Bosco express their opposition to mining.

OPPOSITE: Farmers working in a field next to the main plant of the Tahoe Resources mine in San Rafael Las Flores.

ALL PHOTOS (PAGES 8–11):
James Rodríguez / Oxfam America

LIVES FOR TRUTH

Citizens of Guatemala working to defend the environment and the rights of people to be consulted about industrial mining projects are being falsely accused of crimes. Here are the stories of three of these human rights defenders.

THE POLICE CAME FOR GUILLERMO CARRERA AS HE WALKED OUT OF HIS CHURCH FOLLOWING THE BAPTISM OF A FRIEND'S CHILD. He says they were hiding in the bushes, and as he got in his truck and started the engine, they approached with their guns drawn, asked to see his identification, then arrested him for five crimes he never committed, including attempted kidnapping and attempted murder.



Carrera, 46, is a soft-spoken coffee, maize, and bean farmer who serves as president of the local development committee in his village, Las Casitas, in the mountains above San Rafael Las Flores. He says he has always kept the wishes of his fellow citizens in mind when discussing whether to allow the mine to operate in Las Casitas. Carrera and other representatives from Las Casitas requested a formal consultation to determine whether or not people were in favor of allowing a silver mine in their town: They wanted to take a vote. "We decided it was our priority for the people to decide for themselves. And then, the mayor publicly announced that there would not be any consultation."

After learning the mine was allowed a license, Carrera and others felt they had few other options. "We organized and held peaceful protests," he says. "I'm

sure that by arresting me, what they really wanted to do was to intimidate the population." Jailed for three months in 2013, he was eventually released for lack of evidence, and is now back at home and farming again.

When he was finally released from jail, Carrera says the first thing he did was to visit the small chapel where he was arrested. "I don't think that what I have done is a crime, opposing something I can clearly see is just not right," he says quietly, standing outside his church. "But if we have to offer our lives for the truth, then that is what we have to do."

TERESA MUÑOZ, 43, LIVES ON THE SIDE OF A MOUNTAIN IN A SMALL VILLAGE CALLED SAN JOSÉ LA SIERRA, where she keeps two cows she uses to produce milk and cheese to sell to her neighbors. She's been a speaker at many events mobilizing people to block the mine expansion. When the government brought false charges against her and imposed the state of siege on the area, she even got her own code name: "The Nun."

It's difficult to think of her as some sort of enemy of the state when you visit her at her home, a small place up a rough road, clinging to the side of a steep hillside, surrounded by trees, where she lives with her disabled sister. "Ever since I was a girl I have lived here among nature, breathing fresh air and drinking water from springs coming from the mountain," she says. "Nature has fed me, healed me. I've been happy here. I used to hug the trees when I was a girl. Nature flows in my veins."

Like so many other farmers in the area, she feels that an expanding silver mine would affect the pastures, trees, and water on which she and other farmers depend. "When they threaten nature, then I feel like they are going to take my life too," she says, sitting in the cool shade next to her house.

When the state of siege began, everyone warned her she would be arrested. She was in town selling milk the day they came for her. Returning through the woods, she saw her home surrounded by soldiers.



She eluded them, but they were back the next morning: “My neighbor came to say, ‘The army is coming!’ I was in the shower and I had to run out with shampoo in my hair.”

Muñoz fled into the mountains, and eventually walked 45 miles to Guatemala City and sought shelter at the office of CALAS. After seven months in hiding, the false attempted kidnapping and attempted murder charges against her were dropped, but she is sobered by the experience. “It makes me sad that the government protects the company, and that they are harming nature, and criminalize people who are defending nature,” she says. “If you act peacefully, you know they will call you a criminal. The government humiliates you. ... It’s repressive.”

“The only thing for sure in our lives is death. But we have to fight for the truth. I know I have to defend what I love, and what I love is life and nature. So I will keep doing everything I can, regardless of the consequences.”

RUDY PIVARAL, 30, HELPED FOUND AN ORGANIZATION CALLED THE COMMITTEE IN DEFENSE OF LIFE AND PEACE IN SAN RAFAEL. He and others organized marches and made statements critical of the mine in the media. He was charged with the same false crimes as Guillermo Carrera, and though he avoided capture by the police, being forced into hiding in other parts of Guatemala cost him nearly a year of his life.

Pivaral eluded capture the day after his son was born. “My wife was still recuperating, and the police came and searched the house,” he says. “It was hard, leaving my son behind, and it was hard economically ... then you get used to it. The alternative was going to jail or being killed.” He says he lost

thousands of dollars he invested in his crops, and missed most of the first year of his son’s life.

Pivaral grows coffee, tomatoes, and other vegetables on just over 40 acres. His criticism of the mine springs from concerns about the environment and about the rights of people to speak out.

“What’s clear to me is that in Guatemala, if you want to stand up for people’s rights you’ll be called a criminal,” Pivaral says as he makes coffee in his kitchen. For the moment, he’s happy to be home, glad that the false attempted kidnapping and other charges against him and the others were dropped. In Pivaral’s case, he proved he was in a meeting with the chief of police in San Rafael at the time he allegedly committed the false crimes.

“We showed it was not true. Our critics said I would never be back, that I would never show my face around here again,” he says quietly, but with conviction. “That’s their tactic, to imply that ‘if it can happen to him it can happen to you.’ It keeps people from speaking out.”

“What we want people to know is that we are staying strong in this struggle, to defend nature, and to defend life.”



A CLOSER LOOK Q

To learn more about Oxfam’s work to defend the rights of communities affected by oil, gas, and mining projects, and to join the campaign to protect human rights defenders, visit oxfamamerica.org/rights-resources.



'THE BEST RICE IS LOCAL RICE'

COCO MCCABE EXPLORES HOW A NEW METHOD OF GROWING RICE—AND NEW COMPETITION AMONG BUYERS—COULD HELP HAITIAN FARMERS IN THE ARTIBONITE VALLEY BOOST THEIR YIELDS AND THEIR EARNINGS.

Five years ago, a devastating earthquake rocked Haiti's teeming capital. The quake killed more than 200,000 people and sparked calls for a bold recovery that would ease the dangerous overcrowding in Port-au-Prince by promoting economic opportunity in the provinces. For more than two decades, the stagnation in domestic agriculture had been contributing to a swelling of the slums as farmers and their families sought shelter and work in the capital—and the consequences were deadly.

When Oxfam considered how best to help the struggling island nation after the quake, it made revival of the rice economy the heart of its work in the Artibonite Valley. Together with its

partners, Oxfam has launched a host of initiatives—from training and loan programs to the introduction of a new growing method called the System of Rice Intensification—aimed at helping poor families earn more for the sweat they pour into their fields. But for valley farmers, who grow up to 80 percent of all the rice produced in Haiti, and for the innumerable small enterprises connected to that production, new challenges continue to unfold.

Along the gurgling irrigation ditches and dusty roads of rural Artibonite, there is buzz about a new buyer on the scene—Carribex, a large Haitian-owned company known by the name of its brand: Ti Malice. For the past few harvests, it

has been buying up great volumes of rice, going directly to farmers and saving them the bother and expense of drying, transporting, and milling their harvests—all while offering them a better price than they can get from the traders, small mills, and farming cooperatives to which they have traditionally sold.

In Artibonite, rice pays for everything: food, school fees, doctor bills. It's the core of countless household incomes, but growing it is not an easy way to earn a living. While Haitians consume close to 458,000 tons of rice a year, 83 percent of it comes from abroad where much of its production is subsidized. Imported with low tariffs that make it cheap to buy, foreign rice leaves local farmers struggling

to compete: Their rice can cost consumers twice as much. The glut of foreign rice is part of what has undermined the renewal of Haiti's agriculture sector.

A RED FLAG RAISED

The higher price that Ti Malice offers—now about 18 cents a pound for unmilled rice—can be a boon to a farmer facing a raft of household expenses. But with its expansive purchasing power and wide reach into the valley, Ti Malice's presence has raised a red flag for some farmer advocates. They worry that the company could not only put side operators—like small mills and individual rice sellers—out of business, but could monopolize the entire rice market in the valley.

Already, signs of change can be heard in the silencing of some mills, which provide sorely needed local jobs. Antoine Holange, a local rice grower and president of a farmer organization known as AILA, says he knows of two small mills that closed recently because Ti Malice lured away the farmers who had used them. And at AILA's own mill, business is down, a loss compounded by the fact that some of the mill's earnings help maintain the irrigation ditches the farmers depend on. Holange estimates

that about 8 percent of AILA's 450 members are now selling their rice to Ti Malice.

FARMERS SEE NEW POSSIBILITIES

But farmers are taking a cue from the Ti Malice buying spree: If a private company can broaden its market reach, why can't they?

Emboldened by the training they have received from Oxfam along with their early success with the System of Rice Intensification, or SRI, farmer organizations have formed a consortium to look for new buyers and increase their rice revenue, says Oxfam's Alix Percinthe.

Since Oxfam America and its local partners first began promoting SRI in 2011, they have trained close to 1,000 farmers. More than 250 of them are now practicing the full method on at least part of their land, and others have incorporated some aspects of SRI into their traditional activities. In one set of irrigated fields, the SRI harvests in 2013 increased, on average, by at least 1.5 metric tons per hectare (2.47 acres) over rice grown the traditional way. The 2014 yields were similarly large.

"There isn't anyone who can't do SRI in their field," says farmer Metilia Robert. "What Oxfam gave to me, I am keeping it forever. I am evangelizing with it."

Eyeing a market niche for high-quality rice and with the potential for more robust harvests because of SRI, the consortium, with support from Oxfam, is looking at ways that it could even fill large orders for the World Food Programme.

"The principle is Haitians don't like imported rice," says Percinthe. "The best rice is local rice."

A CLOSER LOOK

Haiti isn't the only country trying to expand its rice production. Read about how farmers in Vietnam are practicing the System of Rice Intensification: oxfamamerica.org/haitisri.



ABOVE: Metilia Robert admits that she was a little worried at how bare her field looked the first time she planted using the System of Rice Intensification. But that fear was short lived. Her rice harvests are now turning heads.

OPPOSITE: As the harvest comes in in October, small mills scattered across Haiti's Artibonite Valley teem with rice grown by local farmers.

PHOTOS: Shiloh Strong / Oxfam America

WHAT'S WRONG?

Small-scale farmers in Haiti have faced an uphill battle in trying to compete against subsidized imported rice that has long flooded their markets and forced many families deeper into poverty.

WHAT'S OXFAM DOING?

Oxfam and its local partners are working to revive the rice economy in the Artibonite Valley. A key part of the effort has been the introduction of a new growing method that promises greater yields of rice while using less water, fertilizer, and seeds.

Right the Wrong



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LEFT: Jennifer Pablo, 37, and her daughter Rose, 9, received aid from Oxfam after Typhoon Haiyan destroyed their home in Tacloban, Philippines, in 2013. *Simon Roberts / Oxfam*