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America

OXFAM Exchange

FALL 2009

FACING DOWN HUNGER

The global food
crisis one year later

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OXFAMExchange Fall 2009

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ABOVE: (Left) Salimata Mariko carries her pots, pans, and other implements into town to make beignets, fried bean cakes, that she sells to make extra money in her village in southern Mali. *Rebecca Blackwell / Oxfam America* (Middle) Huka Balambal has spent his life as a herder. But the degradation of pastureland in southern Ethiopia has made it hard for him to make a living. He is now teaching himself how to farm. *Eva-Lotta Jansson / Oxfam America* (Right) Marks left by Hurricane Katrina's emergency response teams in 2005. *Steve Thackston / Oxfam America*

COVER: Fatou Doumbia is a member of a Saving for Change group in the village of Banakoro, Mali. Her group amassed nearly a ton of millet they were holding to sell, or eat, in the rainy season when food is scarce. *Rebecca Blackwell / Oxfam America*

We welcome your feedback. Please direct letters to editor@oxfamamerica.org or Editor, OXFAMExchange, 226 Causeway Street, 5th Floor, Boston MA 02114-2206.

Dear Friends,

Part of our role at Oxfam is to look hard at the face of poverty presented to the American public. Many of us were raised on images of hungry children with bellies distended by malnutrition, their eyes vast, hands extended.

This was, we were told, the face of hunger.

These faces are part of the picture—but only part. This month, we mark the 25th anniversary of the devastating Ethiopian famine that sparked Band Aid and a global humanitarian movement. Horror and sympathy fueled that public outpouring of support.

A lot of good came from that. But in the end, we believe those iconic images of need obscure long-term solutions. When we see an image of a child, it is vital that we recognize that children are disproportionately affected by malnutrition. But a hungry child exists in a larger context: if we nourish communities, they can nourish their own children.

Look closely at our cover photo. This is Fatou Doumbia. She and other women in her village of Banakoro, Mali, pooled their resources late last year. They set aside nearly a ton of millet as a defense against the hunger they'd seen last year when global food prices spiked. Hers is another face of hunger: determined, resourceful.

After the last harvest, Oxfam reached out to our supporters to respond to the disastrous food crisis at that time. Nearly a year later, we have devoted much of this issue of OXFAMExchange to looking at what communities have done to avoid the kinds of hardships they confronted. When people living in poverty are hit by a food crisis or natural disaster, they lack resources to tide them over. Oxfam's work is to help people build their resilience.

Look hard at Doumbia's face. This is a woman staring hunger down. It is not sympathy she needs. Let respect and hope fuel your efforts to support her.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raymond C. Offenheiser".

Raymond C. Offenheiser
President, Oxfam America

media mashup > look. watch. listen. join the conversation.



**Go online to watch
“Hard Earth, Hard Choices”**
[www.oxfamamerica.org/
slideshows/hard-earth-hard-choices](http://www.oxfamamerica.org/slideshows/hard-earth-hard-choices)

FROM THE OXFAM BLOG



EVA-Lotta JANSSON / OXFAM AMERICA

Could camels be the new cash cow?
by Coco McCabe

A man in the Netherlands is trying to cash in on what the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization says could someday be a \$10 billion market for goods produced from camel's milk. According to The New York Times, Frank Smits has imported a small herd of the lanky, cranky creatures and is coaxing milk out of them at the rate of a gallon and a half a day per camel. And he's selling it, hardened into cheese, for \$60 a pound.

I'm not so sure about their milk (or the price of their cheese), but I have to admit, I'm kind of in love with camels.

Read the rest of this story at
<http://blogs.oxfamamerica.org/>,
keyword: fall09

“ ”

Food security is not merely a question of getting food to hungry people. ... It represents the convergence of complex issues that have a direct bearing on economic growth, energy, and environmental factors. ... It demands a comprehensive response.
Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Date

OXFAM IN THE NEWS

“ ”

What we've done is taken the paradigm of microfinance and flipped it inside out. We're creating autonomous groups and defining sustainability in a whole new way.

Jeffrey Ashe, Oxfam's director of community finance, from as quoted in Time magazine, Aug. 30, 2009



REBECCA BLACKWELL / OXFAM AMERICA

MAKE A DIFFERENCE: GET INVOLVED

Help us launch a new movement. The time is now: ACT FAST with Oxfam.

Oxfam supporters have a long history of working together for change. In 1974, 250,000 people nationwide participated in Oxfam's first *Fast for a World Harvest*; they fasted for the day or for a meal, raising awareness about hunger and donating their food money to Oxfam. So began a national movement to alleviate hunger and poverty in our world. And that's how we first understood the power of "acting fast." Now, we've launched a movement to take it all to the next level.

Writer: Anna Kramer

LEARN >

One in six people worldwide now suffers from chronic hunger. Over a billion women, men, and children.

In 2008 alone, rising food prices forced an additional 40 million people into hunger.

The trend can seem unstoppable, and it's hard to know what one person can do. But what if we turned the numbers in the other direction? What if we saw a growing number of people able to claim their rights, earn a decent living, and provide food for their families?

We can.

Starting today, we're launching a new movement to beat poverty—a movement that could grow even faster than poverty. Together, we can show the power of numbers.

1, 10, 100 ...

GET INVOLVED >

From our work around the world, we know that what starts small—with one person, one idea, a few dollars—can quickly become a force for widespread change. We're inspired by people like Fanta Niambaley (see her story on page 8), who are creating their own solutions to poverty and hunger.

When you pledge to ACT FAST with Oxfam, you agree to do three things:

SIGN 1.

Add one name—yours—to the ACT FAST with Oxfam pledge (go to www.oxfam-america.org/actfast), and signal your commitment to help us beat poverty.

TELL 10.

Educate 10 people about Oxfam's work and the need to ACT FAST. It's easy to get the word out even if you're pressed for time. Send an email to 10 friends or, if you have the time, host an event. The more people who hear about our growing community, the faster the movement to beat poverty will grow. Go to www.oxfamamerica.org/actfast for more ideas and tools.

RAISE 100.

Raise \$100 for Oxfam's work to beat poverty. If time's short, make a donation at www.oxfamamerica.org/actfast/donate. If money's tight, how about inviting 10 friends to each pitch in \$10? Go to www.oxfamamerica.org/actfast for more ideas and tools.

Each step builds on the power of numbers. And each person who takes the pledge brings us closer to our goal of beating poverty.

1, 10, 100: You're part of something bigger.
Take the pledge at www.oxfamamerica.org/actfast.



Responsabilité sociale des hommes et
des femmes dans le pays et charge des
femmes face au VIH/SIDA

THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS ONE YEAR LATER

HOME GROWN SOLUTIONS TO HUNGER

Chris Hufstader reports from Mali, where women entrepreneurs, using a range of strategies, represent the first line of defense against hunger.

Fanta Niambaley fits the key into the lock on the door to a small warehouse. When she opens it, the rich, late winter light pours into the windowless room. In the shadows sit sacks of millet, a locally grown grain. There are 900 kilos (just under one ton), which Niambaley and other women in her community bought for 19 cents per kilo. Later in the year—during the rainy season when grain is scarce and the price will rise—millet could go for 25 cents per kilo, Niambaley says. Selling it all at that price could bring a profit of \$55.

Grain storage banks are not new, but this one sparked my interest. Last year we all heard about the food crisis in the Sahel, the semi-arid zone below the Sahara, where food prices soared so high that millions suffered without enough food. And now here it is, the following March, and I am with this middle-aged woman, the leader of a group of women with a home-grown solution. After all the policy debates and discussion in the press about the food crisis, these women have invested in food reserves that they can eat, or sell for a profit if food prices jump this summer.

"We are very proud of our business, buying and selling cereal," Niambaley says, her face glowing in the light outside the little warehouse.

The (macro)economics of hunger

In 2008, Niambaley and her neighbors were surrounded by fields green with the promise of food. But they didn't have much to tide them over until harvest. Many people in rural

Mali struggle to find money to eat during the summer when prices go up and food is scarce. In farming communities like Niambaley's village, Banakoro, families have all their money tied up in their crops during the growing season. But last year was worse than usual: grain prices shot up 25 percent. Prices go up to a certain degree every year during the rainy season because of increased demand. And if families have no extra money to buy food at a higher price, eating less is the only option. But last year, because the spike was worse, the shortfall was greater. For most of the poorest people, who must spend a large proportion of their income on food, 2008 was devastating.

It was a food crisis.

When the rains come and farmers can produce a good crop of millet, maize, groundnuts—or perhaps cotton to sell for cash—they usually have to sell it right away to pay doctor bills and school fees, buy clothing, and meet other cash expenses. They can rarely get ahead. So, in Banakoro, Niambaley and two dozen other women came up with a strategy to cope with this age-old problem. As members of a group that is part of Oxfam's Saving for Change program, they pooled their savings and invested in millet. When it comes time for the group to sell the stockpiled grain, the needs of the group come first if there is a serious food crisis. But if all 25 members have enough food and money to take care of their own needs, the group could be looking at

a hefty shared profit: nearly 32 percent on their initial investment, or about \$2 each—enough to cover a child's visit to a clinic.

Entrepreneurs on the rise

The kind of pride I see in Niambaley is won through hard work and a sense of accomplishment. Women who devise their own ways of making money and feeding their families gain strength and optimism, but part of it comes from creating their own solutions. One elderly woman I met called Moh Mariko said that since she joined a Saving for Change group, she has experienced a sort of enlightenment. She explains that her new entrepreneurial skills have changed so many aspects of her life that she thinks about herself differently. She has shifted from the mind-set of simply coping; she has proven she can build a business and succeed. Mariko explains this transformation simply: "My mind is more open now."

The entrepreneurial spirit is strong in Mali. Rural women have business ideas, but lack capital. Oxfam's Saving for Change groups meet an important need for those with energy and vision. Salimata Mariko is a good example: she borrows money from her Saving for Change group to travel to the border of Ivory Coast and buy yams that she sells in her town of Zantiebougou-Fala. She then takes the profit from this to buy millet. She takes the millet to Bamako, the capital of Mali (about three hours away by minibus), to sell it at a better price than she would get near her village. Though fuel prices are high (one reason food is expensive these days), she can still make about a \$3 profit for each sack of millet she sells in Bamako. Depending on

« Fanta Niambaley waters lettuce and onions in the garden she started with money borrowed from her Saving for Change group. Her savings help her buy food in the later summer and fall when prices inevitably go up. *Rebecca Blackwell / Oxfam America*

Understanding the global food price crisis

Food prices rose all over the world last year, not just in Mali. Oxfam estimated that global food prices were up 83 percent compared with 2005, which directly threatened 290 million people in poor countries. Prices remain high in 2009; one billion people are now coping with hunger worldwide.



THE ONGOING CHALLENGES

Depleted soil Intense use of synthetic fertilizers, and pesticides, as well as deforestation and desertification, diminish soil quality.

Less water Water—and therefore the water available for agriculture—is decreasing as we see more erratic rainfall patterns and overuse of groundwater. Deforestation also increases water runoff and limits groundwater replenishment.

Rising temperatures and climate change For each increase in temperature of one degree Celsius (almost two degrees Fahrenheit), there is a corresponding 10 percent reduction in wheat, rice, and corn yields.

Energy prices and fuel crop policies High fuel prices have increased global demand for biofuels. Land devoted to cultivating biofuel crops reduces the amount of land available for growing food.

“Land grabbing” Some wealthy countries and private investors are buying or leasing large tracts of land in foreign countries to grow food instead of buying food on world markets. There may be as many as 50 million acres tied up in these deals in about a dozen countries, including Ethiopia, Malawi, and Sudan, which are facing chronic food shortages and are forced to rely on food aid.

Neglect of small-scale farming Ever since the “green revolution” in the 1960s, investment in agriculture has supported farmers who already have secure access to land, water, and markets. With poorer quality soil, less water, and increasingly costly petroleum-based fertilizers, high-tech innovations in agriculture cannot produce the gains we saw in the first decades of the green revolution, says Tim Mahoney, Oxfam America’s agriculture expert. “There has been an underinvestment in smallholder agriculture for the last two to three decades,” he says. “And now that agricultural production is down, the ability of small farmers to meet the increased demand is not there. They just don’t have the capacity.”

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

Provide emergency food aid Governments should supply food aid in severe food shortages. Food should be purchased locally or regionally to reduce transport costs and speed up delivery. In many cases, providing cash directly to poor people, as well as agricultural inputs like seeds and tools, will help people buy food and boost food production.

Support small-scale agriculture Helping the roughly 400 million small-scale farmers thrive helps circulate money in rural economies, spreads out the benefits of economic growth, and reduces poverty and malnutrition. Empowered with knowledge and incentives, small farms can preserve biodiversity, help conserve soil and water, and create more local jobs.

Stop pushing biofuels The amount of grain required to produce the ethanol needed to fill the tank of an SUV is enough to feed one person for an entire year. This is an inefficient use of agriculture and is responsible for 30 percent of recent food price inflation, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute.

Make trade fair and create a new deal for agriculture Wealthy countries need to commit to policies that will improve trade prospects for poor countries, like reducing tariffs on agricultural goods. They should work with the UN and poor countries to develop new ways of supporting agriculture that will stabilize global markets, and they should engage in serious talks about how the world trade system can help the poorest farmers.

“ ”

The neglect of small-scale farming is really coming home to roost.

—Tim Mahoney, Oxfam America’s senior agriculture director

2009 HUNGER SEASON IN MALI

The UN Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) monitors rainfall, pasture growth, and growing conditions in Mali. Over the summer it reported that early erratic summer rainfall eventually gave way to steadier rains that were helping farmers get their grain crops planted and growing. It noted, however, that this period also coincides with the advent of the hunger season in Mali, known as the soudure, and predicted that "poor households will be turning to the market once their own grain reserves are depleted. ... The steady upward trend in prices is weakening purchasing power in general and that of poor households in particular." The highest food prices usually come in September and October, just before the harvest. Source: FEWS NET, "West Africa: Mali," www.fews.net/mali.

how many bags of millet she can transport, Mariko reports that she can clear between \$17 and \$20 on an average trip—and just after harvest she can do two trips a week.

Her other business is making beignets, small fried bean cakes. She buys the beans, washes them, pounds them into a paste, and fries little pieces in a wide pan over an open fire next to the well in the center of the village. Mariko says she borrows about \$2 each month, buys the beans and oil and other ingredients, and makes about five batches of beignets. After paying back the loan, she reports she can make about \$7.50 in profit over the course of a month, preparing and selling beignets two times a week.

Mariko presides over her beignet pan and fire next to the well, modestly describing her businesses and dropping the cakes into scraps of paper her customers bring by. Her face is serious: Mariko says she has been a member of the Saving for Change group in Zantiebougou-Fala since 2007. Three of her children are still in school, which costs \$1.25 per month. She reported no food shortage problems during the rainy season last year and was not concerned about the coming 2009 rainy season.

There's even enough left over for small luxuries: "I buy clothes for my kids for holidays like Tabaski. I might even get a present for my husband, but I won't say what in front of all these people." Not until then does she flash a big smile and hide her face for just an instant, suddenly shy at all the attention.

"Cotton dignity"

Within an hour by car from Zantiebougou-Fala, I met some women who are working in a traditionally male-dominated industry to launch their fight against hunger: cotton farmers.

Southern Mali is cotton country: cotton is one of Mali's biggest exports and one of the few cash crops in the region. Low prices on world cotton markets make it a tough way to make a living these days, but Oxfam has been working with organic cotton grower cooperatives to help farmers get a premium price. Although demand for cotton is low now, coop members in Sibirila say organic cotton helps them earn a decent living.

Fanta Sinayogo has been growing organic cotton for four years, along with groundnuts, fonio (a local type of millet), and organic sesame seeds. Last year she devoted about 1.2 acres to cotton, harvesting 880 pounds for which she earned about \$225 (54 cents per kilo, a premium price). She explains that before she began growing cotton, she was not financially self-sufficient. "I didn't have enough food," she says, sitting inside her house, which she shares with her husband and three youngest children. "It was a real problem. But thanks to growing organic cotton, I can now use the money to buy more food for my children, and school supplies."

In 2008, when food prices in Sibirila rose dramatically, leaving many scrambling for extra money, Sinayogo had a reserve on which to draw. "I used my savings from growing organic cotton the previous year to buy grain for the family," she says modestly.

Most farmers have to borrow money for pesticides and fertilizer to grow cotton, but organic farmers like Sinayogo use no pesticides and make their own organic fertilizer. They walk away with their final payment from the cooperative with no debts. It's a good feeling, and they have a term for it in Bambara, the local language: *koori haron*.

It means "cotton dignity."



Salimata Mariko exemplifies the entrepreneurial spirit in Mali: she trades widely from the Ivory Coast border to Bamako, funding her ventures with capital borrowed from her Saving for Change group. *Rebecca Blackwell / Oxfam America*



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To learn more about Oxfam's work on hunger and food security, go to www.oxfamamerica.org/issues/hunger-food-security.



THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS ONE YEAR LATER

Food is easily finished; THE ROAD WILL LAST

Coco McCabe reports from Ethiopia, where a lifetime of experience has taught elders that the answer to chronic hunger is lasting change—whether that takes the form of revitalized pasture or a much-needed road.

On a cold morning in mid-August, under a heavy sky, a line of elders make their way across a sea of cream-colored grasses. Swallowed to their waists, they move fast, the wind whipping their wraps as they scissor through fields pungent with the smell of the herb *beso bela* and tangy with rain.

This is a patch of Dida Liben—the pastureland of their youth and now a source of hope for their future—reborn, miraculously, inside a 275-acre bramble enclosure near the southern Ethiopian town of Negele Borena. Around the newly rehabilitated pasture stretches what is left of a once highly productive grazing area: red earth, scoured by wind and bristling with invasive, thorny acacia trees.

"The whole of Dida Liben looked like this when I was young—all seasons, all the time," says Kotola Buyale, 78, sitting now, half hidden like he had been as a boy, in the tangle of tall grasses. "We didn't worry about drought. We had never seen farming land. Everyone had milk. Everyone had livestock."

For herding families in the Liben District of the Guji Zone, shortages of everything—rain, pastureland, food—have replaced those years of plenty. Increased cycles of drought brought on, perhaps, by climate change; curtailed cattle migration and the overgrazing that follows; privatization of common lands in some parts of the region—all of these have come together

to slowly squeeze the vitality out of a centuries-old way of life and, increasingly, to push people to the brink of disaster.

That was the case last year when drought, combined in a deadly mix with soaring food prices, left many people facing hunger. Some reported that the shortage of food was so severe they could eat only once every two days, and that meal was a small one.

"The failure of crops led to lack of food in the market. The grain store in Negele was empty," says Kote Ibrahim, the executive director of the Liben Pastoralist Development Association, or LPDA, a local aid group and one of Oxfam America's partners. "Even if you had money, you couldn't buy food."

"Drought is like fire," adds one elder from Hadhesa. "It just destroyed every household."

Big questions, long-term solutions

In the face of such devastation, how can communities adapt to changing circumstances, rebuild themselves, and ward off future crises? Those are the questions LPDA tackled with the help of a \$163,000 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation—part of its \$2 million award to Oxfam to address the countrywide crisis that had left millions of Ethiopians facing hunger.

Always, the inspiration behind the answers comes from the communities themselves.

Solutions include embracing new ways of shepherding resources—as in the Dida Liben pasture rehabilitation project—and daring to dream big, as did some of the 600 families isolated for decades in the rangeland near the Dawa River. A road out was what they wanted, and a road is what many of them helped to build—all 28 miles of it, hacked through bush and ledge using only the hand tools provided by LPDA.

Both projects, whose long-term benefits are just beginning to be realized, began as a way to quickly get food into the hands of the hungriest people: in exchange for thinning thorn bushes from the pasture and opening a road through the bush, workers received an allotment of food for their families.

The road to Malka Halloye

Epic is the word that comes to mind on the two-hour drive down the new road to the riverbank settlement of Malka Halloye. Clouds of dust swell around the truck, and waves of sharp stones rattle its underpinnings. It took 280 pairs of hands 90 days to carve this road into the landscape—and every turn seems etched in the minds of those who willed it into reality: here's where the track was once so narrow, 17 cows fell to their death; and here's where the stone was so hard, it shattered hammers; and here's where 25 people spent a full month wrestling rocks out of the way.

« Water from the Dawa River in southern Ethiopia gushes through a channel on land that Huka Balambal, a herder, has now taken to farming. Balambal began by watering his crops by hand. But determined to find a new way to support his large family, he bought himself a pump and a long line of hose to irrigate the corn and onions that both feed his children and provide some income. Eva-Lotta Jansson / Oxfam America



Kote Ibrahim (on the left in the tan jacket) and a group of elders relish the return of grasses to a newly restored section of pastureland known as Dida Liben. They remember when all the grasses in the area were this tall. *Eva-Lotta Jansson / Oxfam America*

**"We have proved we can restore the land and regain our pasture," says 51-year-old Gelma Liben, stretched out in the grass.
"We can take care of ourselves now."**

"We were burning with desire for development for the last 20 years," says one local leader. "Food is easily finished, but the road will last."

And with it, hope that the families in this area will see the schools they've never had, receive the medical care they need, and have an easy way to get to market.

"The road is everything," says Huka Balam-bal, the 64-year-old leader of the riverbank communities. A herder turned part-time farmer, he was the first to imagine its possibility—a longing sparked by the loss of part of an onion crop. The vegetables rotted when his camels couldn't transport them fast enough through the thorny bush to the market in Hadhesa. Now, the road should speed things up.

It's rough, though—probably too rough for a large transport truck to make it all the way to Malka Halloye. But having accomplished so much with so little, locals are fired with determination: they are already talking

about finding a way to get some heavy machinery in to finish the job.

"We can take care of ourselves now"

That same resolution has fertilized the pasture in the enclosure at Dida Liben.

At first, some people resisted the idea of fencing off a part of the land across which they once roamed freely. Buyale was among them. But now, sitting on the warm earth sheltered from the wind by a wall of grasses, he marvels at the regeneration around him. After workers cleared the spiky invasives and used the brush to build the fence, the first rains brought immediate change, says Buyale—enough to convince him that something unexpected was happening. The pasture was coming

back; there would be fodder to sustain the local herds during the dry season and help ensure the well-being of the families who depend on them for food and income.

"The whole idea is to take the livestock through the dry season and help them reach the rainy season," says Wario Jilo, LPDA's program coordinator. "The next rain the grasses will grow taller—denser and taller. This place will be full."

By one estimate, these 275 acres of grass could feed 3,000 heads of livestock for one month—a far more cost-effective option than buying hay in Addis Ababa (the distant capital) and shipping it south for a total cost of \$5 per bale. Oxfam has supported that approach in the past as a means of saving the lives of animals—and the lives of their owners. But with pasture preservation, the grass is right here, where it's needed, and each acre can produce almost 1.2 tons of hay.

"We have proved we can restore the land and regain our pasture," says 51-year-old Gelma Liben, stretched out near Buyale in the grass. "We can take care of ourselves now."



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To learn more about Oxfam's work on long-term development solutions in Ethiopia, go to www.oxfamamerica.org/regions/horn-of-africa.

The struggle continues in Ghana

Members of a farmers' group in western Ghana continue the long struggle to claim their rights in court. But one member loses everything in a surprise legal move.

Writer: Chris Hufstader



The first time I met James Sarpong was in May 2007 when I visited Teberebie, a small town in Ghana that had been relocated to make way for the Iduapriem Gold Mine. We went to his farm, some distance outside town, walking through the forest and small plots of vegetables and pineapples to his three small mud-and-thatch dwellings. His compound was bordered by oil palms, but just beyond a thin perimeter of the spiky trees were huge piles of gray rocks, dug up from the mine pit and transported to Sarpong's farm. He was surrounded on three sides. Years ago, his farm included eight acres with 284 oil palms; now he had only a handful of trees and less than an acre not already covered in rocks.

Sarpong's farm

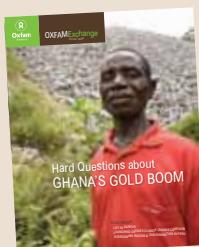
Sarpong had moved here in 1984. He and his wife had raised six children on this farm. "It used to be lively here," he said. "We lived as a family, and we had everything: goats, sheep, fowl—everything." They had used water from a stream running next to their home, now diverted by the waste rocks. Sarpong had sent his family away to live with relatives since they no longer had drinkable water.

The AngloGold Ashanti mining company had offered Sarpong money for his farmland and trees in 2004, but he'd decided it was not enough and refused to move. He and about 35 others had formed an organization called Concerned Farmers' Association of Teberebie to fight the terms of the compensation agreement, and they had brought their case to Ghana's courts. Although all the other members of the Concerned Farmers' Association had moved off their farms, Sarpong had remained on his, awaiting the legal judgment.

This summer: Eviction

As the case dragged through the courts, this past summer there was another legal decision that shocked Sarpong: a judge granted an eviction order, and AngloGold moved in and demolished what was left of the Sarpong homestead before his lawyer could file an appeal. According to a press release from Oxfam America's partner WACAM, an environmental and human rights organization in Ghana, his dwellings were destroyed and all his property was seized, a violation of Ghana's Minerals and Mining Act.

Sarpong is now living in WACAM's office in Tarkwa, about 20-minute drive from Teberebie. He is 65 and has no home or means to make a living. WACAM's executive director Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, says the court order to demolish Sarpong's farm "shows how corporate power could erode our democratic structures and render our judicial system liable to corporate influence."



The Concerned Farmers' Association in Teberebie.
Jane Hahn / Oxfam America



James Sarpong, on the cover of OXFAMExchange when we first reported his story in 2008. To read that story about Sarpong and Ghana's gold boom, go to www.oxfamamerica.org/publications/winter-2008.

Waiting for justice

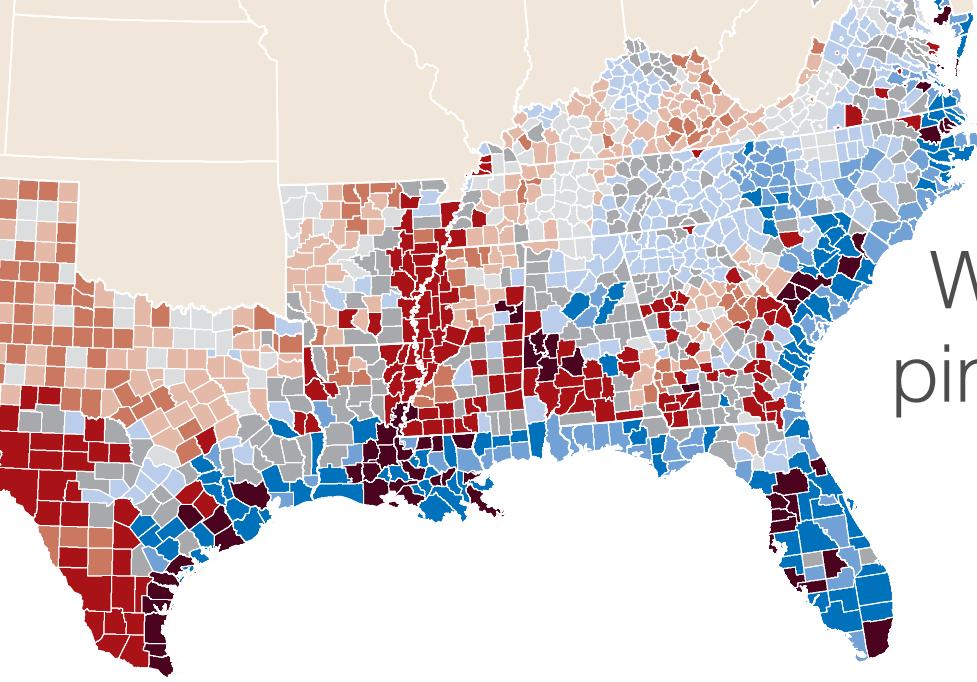
The legal system in Ghana is slow—as in many countries—but it does not help the Concerned Farmers' Association that the date slated for a judgment in their case came and went in August with no decision. The judge, it seems, happened to retire just before the ruling was due. A new judge has been assigned to the case.

When I got Sarpong on the phone in Ghana in August, he was happy to say hello but honored his lawyer's advice not to discuss the case. Paul Ahornuy, who works for WACAM in Tarkwa, says the demolition of Sarpong's houses created a furor in Ghana. Ahornuy says it will take more time before the case in Teberebie can be resolved, but that "this is a human rights issue, and we need to support them in their struggle."



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Help farmers like Sarpong defend their rights. Join Oxfam's Right to Know, Right to Decide campaign at www.oxfamamerica.org/rights-resources.



What if we could pinpoint who'd be hardest hit by disasters? We can.

Oxfam's Anna Kramer explains what social vulnerability mapping is and how it could change the way Americans prepare for the worst.

Founded by freed slaves just after the Civil War, Princeville, NC, was the first US town incorporated and governed by African-Americans—many of whose descendants still live there today. But the town's founders “had to take whatever land they could get,” wrote Emily Yellin in a 1999 New York Times’s article. “In 1865, that was a snake-infested, mosquito-ridden swamp in a flood plain. It was land that the white people in nearby Tarboro, on the northern side of the river, did not want.”

Turns out, some things don’t change.

When the muddy waters of the Tar River coursed through eastern North Carolina on Sept. 16, 1999, it was Princeville that bore the brunt of the flooding. All told, the rising waters killed six people; destroyed or damaged 1,183 homes; and, according to NASA’s Earth Observatory, “all but erased the town.”

Sadly, Princeville isn’t an isolated case. Worldwide, the most vulnerable communities are the ones hit hardest by natural hazards like droughts, floods, and storms—threats that are becoming more frequent and severe, owing to climate change.

This summer, Oxfam commissioned Susan L. Cutter and Christopher T. Emrich of the University of South Carolina’s Hazards and Vulnerability Research Institute to map social vulnerability in the southeastern US—site of the country’s most persistent poverty. Cutter and Emrich identified counties in 13 states that reveal a high level of vulnerability to floods, hurricane-force winds, sea level rise, drought, or a combination of these hazards.

What makes a community vulnerable? A mix of physical factors and social characteristics, including demographic, economic, and housing conditions. In Miami-Dade County, FL, for example, over 50 percent of the land lies within a flood zone and 100 percent within a hurricane wind hazard zone. So, faced with a major hurricane, people in socially vulnerable neighborhoods in the county—like Miami’s Little Haiti, home to many poor immigrant families—are at greatest risk of property loss, injury, and death. And it is these families that have the fewest resources to respond to or recover from a disaster.

As a next step, the institute will share its Social Vulnerability Index with policy

HOW WE CAN PROTECT VULNERABLE AMERICANS FROM DISASTER

At the national level, we need to:

- Support legislation that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and provides resources for poor people here and abroad to build their resilience.
- Strengthen disaster preparedness plans by prioritizing assistance to those least able to cope when disaster strikes.
- Promote coastal restoration, rebuilding projects that create more resilience to high winds and flooding, water efficiency projects, and early warning programs—all of which can also create jobs.

makers, emergency management officials, and community leaders. The institute and Oxfam hope these findings will inform smarter disaster preparation plans for the nation’s most disadvantaged areas.

As for Princeville, in late 1999 town leaders voted against a federal buyout that would require residents to relocate, opting instead to rebuild with stronger buildings. That recovery process continues 10 years later.

“[At first] I said there is no way I’m going back, I was so devastated,” one Princeville resident told The New York Times shortly after the floods. “But then I thought about it, and I said, ‘Why should I give up what my ancestors worked so hard to leave us?’”



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To learn more and see the full set of social vulnerability maps, go to www.oxfamamerica.org/adapt.

Four-year-old Keron opens the door to his grandmother's home in 2008. The walls still bear the marks left by Hurricane Katrina emergency response teams. Historically African-American neighborhoods like New Orleans's Ninth Ward—where 36 percent of residents lived below the poverty line when the 2005 storm hit—suffered some of the most severe flood damage.
Steve Thackston / Oxfam America





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