



DATA ADVOCACY

**THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL INEQUALITY FRAMEWORK:
THE OXFAM TOOLKIT**



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No two country teams are in exactly the same position in terms of how they are tackling inequalities. Some may have a well-researched national inequality report and an active national campaign. Others may be campaigning on inequality-related themes, but with no defined inequality strategy or targeted inequality research. The approach taken here is to provide guidance for reflections that can be used flexibly in your planning workshops.

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Options for data advocacy

It is likely that in your efforts to implement the framework you have found some **data gaps**. One programming option you may want to consider is to get involved in **data advocacy** in your country. This is not merely about delving into a technical exercise. What is being – and not being – measured matters. It gets attention and shapes our views of reality. Certain problems are highlighted, while certain issues and groups are rendered (in)visible. Without the right data being made available, appropriately targeted research is impossible and the **'killer facts'**¹ that Oxfam uses to generate awareness about extreme inequalities becomes more difficult. What is being measured also reflects a country's priorities: the data available are likely to determine how public policy is designed and aid funds directed.

In the context of the new Sustainable Development Goals and their targets – and the increasing international commitment to equality – there are greater opportunities for data advocacy. Oxfam has included data advocacy in its Inequality Policy Team strategy with the key focus for its influence being the United Nations, World Bank and IMF. These agencies are targeted given the important role they play in setting goals in relation to inequality reduction and in the practices of data collection. Oxfam is calling for a special, global initiative to improve the collection of inequality data. This global call would be bolstered by country level advocacy around the data needed to measure and capture properly the inequalities prevalent in societies.

If you are interested in data advocacy around inequality, the measurement aspects of this framework will have already helped you to identify **data gaps**. From this you can make an assessment of key inequality data gaps on which you want to focus. A critical aspect in this assessment is **data disaggregation**. Even if you have been able to find data for certain domains of the framework, it may be that the level of disaggregation needed to analyse inequalities to your satisfaction and needs is not available. It is imperative that sufficient, high quality information is available to enable analysis of the progress of different groups and across different geographies. A key aspect of your data advocacy is likely to be directed at this issue, targeting improved categories of disaggregation and consistent application of these across all national surveys.

As discussed in the measurement and indicators section, a useful way of applying this framework would be to include a **deliberative consultation exercise on disaggregation characteristics** conducted with key stakeholders (including your national statistics office). This exercise could include building an alliance of relevant stakeholders who would use the data. It would allow Oxfam and allies to build consensus on the nationally relevant characteristics for disaggregation and serve as a foundation for data advocacy efforts.

¹ <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/creating-killer-facts-and-graphics-253013>

BOX 3: Summary of options for data advocacy

- Oxfam can advocate for high quality data that measure inequalities to be consistently and more frequently produced by national statistics offices. This can be framed as linked to the fulfilment of commitments to measure equity within the SDGs. The most important data gaps identified under the framework and linked to the SDGs – where data is unavailable or poorly disaggregated – should be highlighted within these efforts.
- Oxfam can map the areas where inequality data are particularly poor and present this to key donors such as the World Bank and UN agencies, and national institutions. Oxfam can design new survey questions and/or advocate for areas of existing surveys to be strengthened to capture relevant aspects of inequality appropriately.
- Oxfam can advocate for more public access to data sets to enable research institutions and civil society to analyse data related to inequalities better.
- Oxfam can advocate nationally for the government to use the Palma as an alternative to the Gini as a national measure of income inequality. The Palma – a measure that contrasts the income of the richest 10% to the income share of the poorest 40% – demonstrates clearly the problem of income inequality. Using it will ensure national attention is focused on what is happening to the income share of the richest as compared to the poorest in the country. The UN has already adopted the Palma as a relevant measure in its HDI report. There is great scope to broaden the legitimacy and use of this measure.
- Oxfam can advocate nationally for governments to commit to measuring inequality before and after taxes and transfers. Governments should routinely be measuring this to comply with a basic commitment to equity. However, national statistical institutes will need support, in some cases, to do this and governments and donors need to commit publicly to this step and invest in this area.
- Oxfam can advocate for new data to be collected to shed light on income and wealth concentration at the top (without compromising on privacy). For example, it can be argued that anonymised, income tax records be made publicly available. Already the World Wealth and Incomes Database collects information from tax records. However, this is only from a small number of countries. Oxfam can also advocate for property and estate tax data to be made available, as well as data from property and luxury goods markets, data from wealth management firms, and company surveys on wages.
- Oxfam can advocate to ensure that national survey data includes the aspect of decision-making within the household, looking at both women's control over income and family planning decisions and attitudes towards women. (These aspects are already included in some Demographic and Health Surveys so comprehensiveness here should first be reviewed). Oxfam can also advocate for data to be collected on the participation of women in local governance structures. An internationally accepted indicator related to local level participation and influence is needed to increase progress in this area.
- Oxfam can advocate around the agricultural census. This is a major area of weakness for many developing countries, not just in terms of their frequency but also with regard to their comprehensiveness. Often the critical fact of the pattern of land ownership is omitted or poorly covered, including its gender aspect. The World Census on Agriculture reviews how data are being collected across countries. It is possible to evaluate data gathering in your country by comparison.
- Oxfam can advocate for improved measurement of violence against women and girls. While some Demographic and Health Surveys include information in this area a standard module is not used across all countries. How data are gathered on violence against women and girls is also a relevant issue for a country's criminal

justice system. This can also be investigated and included in Oxfam's data advocacy in order to render properly visible the problem of violence against women and girls.

If you would like to make contributions to this guide, please contact Alex Prats at Oxfam Intermon:
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This Oxfam toolkit was written by Claire Kumar. The Multidimensional Inequality Framework and online toolkits are free resources which have been developed as part of a collaboration between academics in the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) at the London School of Economics (LSE) and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), led by Abigail McKnight, and practitioners in Oxfam, led by Alex Prats. The initial project was funded by the LSE's International Inequalities Institute's Atlantic Visiting Fellows Programme.

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This paper is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development, poverty and inequality. For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email inequality.toolkit@oxfam.org

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