

CAPACITY BUILDING INQUIRY Submission No. 39
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27th September 2002.

Committee Secretary,
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Affairs,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities.

Our submission addresses the following terms of reference:

"The Committee will inquire into and report on strategies to assist Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders better manage the delivery of services within their communities. In particular, the Committee will consider building the capacities of:

- (a) community members to better support families, community organisations and representative councils so as to deliver the best outcomes for individuals, families and communities;*
- (b) Indigenous organisations to better deliver and influence the delivery of services in the most effective, efficient and accountable way; and*
- (c) government agencies so that policy direction and management structures will improve individual and community outcomes for Indigenous people."*

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, (Oxfam Community Aid Abroad), is an independent, secular Australian organisation working in over 30 countries and in Indigenous Australia. Our vision is of a world in which people control their lives, their basic rights are respected and their environment is sustained. In working towards this vision, we use both our overseas projects and our advocacy programs. Oxfam Community Aid Abroad was merged with Freedom from Hunger in 1992 and is the Australian member of Oxfam International, as well as a member of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA).

Yours sincerely,


James Ensor,
Director of Public Policy and Outreach.

Summary

1. Oxfam Community Aid Abroad is not an Indigenous organisation and does not seek to represent the views of Indigenous Australians. This submission draws on Oxfam Community Aid Abroad's experience in working with Indigenous communities in 21 countries across the globe, and in particular our Indigenous Australia Program.

Given the breadth of our international experience, what is striking to Oxfam Community Aid Abroad is similarity of underlying problems that confront Indigenous peoples around the world. Usually, Indigenous peoples are among the most marginalised of the poor, have the least political power and, because of prior ownership of land, find themselves in conflict with commercial interests and dominant cultures wishing to exploit their natural resources. Reluctance by dominant cultures to acknowledge often complex Indigenous land ownership systems and spiritual relationships with land is nearly universal.

2. Oxfam Community Aid Abroad works in more than 30 countries across the globe, and in Indigenous Australia. In all its work, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad seeks to enable those experiencing poverty, suffering, marginalisation and injustice to take control of the community development process.
3. Oxfam Community Aid Abroad works in a variety of ways to achieve this aim: working in partnership with accountable organisations in the developing world and in Indigenous Australia; preparing for, mitigating and responding to humanitarian crises; and advocating and campaigning for changes in the policies and practices of the Australian government, Australian companies and regional and global institutions.¹
4. Underpinning the work that Oxfam Community Aid Abroad does in partnership with accountable organisations is our rights based approach to development and the concept of capacity building.

Together with our Oxfam International colleagues, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad takes what we call a rights based approach to our work on poverty and injustice. We believe that poverty and suffering are primarily caused and perpetuated by the denial of rights between and within nations, resulting in the exploitation and oppression of poor and powerless people.

This approach implies that States have obligations and citizens have rights. These rights are expressed through international commitments, including the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights together with a range of more specific commitments made by governments at international forums such as the 1990 Education for All forum in Jontiem, Thailand.

¹ Oxfam Community Aid Abroad Strategic Plan 2002 – 2005 "Making a Difference".

This analysis is the basis for Oxfam International's strategic planning framework. As a global network, the work of Oxfam International has five overall aims that guide our international development, humanitarian and campaigning programs. The aims are expressed in terms of basic rights. For each aim, the Oxfams have set program targets reflecting rights that must be met over an agreed time frame.

We believe that all people have:

The right to a sustainable livelihood The right to have enough to eat all year round, and a secure income; the right to use and protect natural resources – forests, rivers, land – people need for their livelihoods; the right to secure employment, decent pay and dignified working conditions; the right to take part in and benefit from markets.

The right to basic services The right to affordable and adequate basic health services, clean water, sanitation and public health services; the right of all children and adults to good quality basic education, and the educational opportunities they need to overcome poverty.

The right to life and security The right to live free from violence and in a safe, secure environment. Oxfam's programs aim to reduce the number of people who die, fall ill or are displaced from their homes by armed conflict or natural disasters.

The right to be heard. The right of all people – including the poorest and most powerless – to have a say in decisions that affect their lives. Oxfam's programs aim to give such communities the skills and moral support to exercise this right effectively.

The right to an identity – gender and diversity. The right of all people, including those that currently bear the greatest burden of poverty and oppression – women, Indigenous peoples and other cultural minorities – to live free from discrimination and to enjoy equal status with others in their society.

This basic framework is used to work towards the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and similar international agreements in a practical way.

5. The Terms of Reference for this inquiry refer to improving the ability of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders to better manage the delivery of services in their communities. It is our view that in order to achieve this a profound understanding of, and support for, capacity building is required.
6. Capacity building is not just training and it is not simply about individual and collective skills development. Capacity building is about community development and is essentially a political process. In our experience, any capacity building initiative should include the reclamation of cultural identity, recognition of and reinforcement of Indigenous cultural protocols and ways, address systemic and individual racism, strengthen the individual's and community's civil and political voice, and raise the individual's self esteem and hope.

7. Capacity Building cannot simply be understood as something that government and NGOs can *provide* to Indigenous Communities. It must also entail capacity building of the individuals and agencies involved in government service delivery.
8. Services are a citizenship right, not an earned privilege². The onus of responsibility for provision of service delivery to Indigenous communities should not be shifted to the communities under the guise of capacity building. Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, as part of Oxfam International, is committed to the principle that equitable access to basic social services is a right recognized in international agreements and guaranteeing this right is the responsibility of governments.³

What is Capacity Building?

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad views capacity building as a process which engages those involved in the very substance of the "development approach". It is not a tool to be brought to communities.

This understanding of capacity building uses and respects local knowledge and experience in a participatory and empowering way whilst seeking to introduce new information and resources in the context of the relationships and dialogue between people.

"Capacity building is an approach to development not something separate from it. It is a response to the multi-dimensional processes of change, not a set of discrete or pre-packaged technical interventions intended to bring about a pre-defined outcome. In supporting organizations working for social justice, it is also necessary to support the various capacities they require to do this: intellectual, organizational, social, political, cultural, material, practical, or financial."⁴

Capacity Building as Development.

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad can, on the basis of experience, describe a way of working with people - commonly called "developmental".

Developmental work is work which is involved in the realities of people's everyday lives. Development work is often described as people-centred, that is work that is about people working and doing together. This work should not be confused with service work or service delivery.

The services of professional and skilled people are necessary and important. However, the different roles and nature of community development and social development must be clear.

² eg. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 25). Adopted & proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III), 10th December 1948.

³ Oxfam International Strategic Plan 2001 – 2004 "Towards Global Equity"
http://www.oxfaminternational.org/about_strat.htm

⁴ Eade, D. 1997. Capacity-Building, An approach to People-Centred Development, pp23-49. Oxford: An Oxfam Publication

The purpose of community development is the development of people within a community. Community development work is properly about the empowerment of people to build their capacities, together with others, to better manage their affairs. Although not a replacement for the provision of services or professional assistance, a community development approach has a distinctly different developmental approach to social development and service provision.

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad believes that developmental work has a rightful place alongside other contributions that help people to live better lives. Community development work is often the core work of building strong communities, communities where there is: solidarity with others, where things are done with and for each other and where there is a sense of safety, belonging and identity.

Although this work is, by its nature, unique to a given situation, it is not haphazard. There are skills, key principles, crafts and rhythms to the work such that it is disciplined and can properly be called methodological.

The methods used in development work can be described, taught and learned by those seeking to engage in it. A way to describe some of the development cycles of this work is:

- **Micro method** work helps people reach beyond their solitariness to connect and form relationships with one another.
- **Mezza method** work is about assisting individuals into groups to achieve public beneficial activity through projects and programs.
- **Macro method** work facilitates the building of community based and controlled organisations from the established relationships, projects and programs established at micro and mezza levels.

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad believes it is possible to engage in this development work to build the capacities of Indigenous communities by using the various methodological approaches pertinent to individuals, groups and organisations.

Community development and Social development.

Community relations, community liaison and community planning should not be confused with community development which has a particular methodology characterised by a relationship based approach and which requires personal energy. Capacity building is about extending this precious developmental resource.

Some of the basic differences in approach between community development work and social development are outlined in the following table. The essential difference in approach is between a developmental approach focused on community control and empowerment and an approach characterised by the provision of services for people as somewhat passive recipients.

Point of Distinction	Social Development Approach	Community Development Approach
Authority base	Top Down	Bottom up
Work	Working for	Working with
Value base	Emphasis on Equity	Emphasis on Equality
Outcome focus	Product goals	Process goals
Democratic style	Representative	Participatory
Relationship	Role based	Mutual
Terms of engagement	Professional	Partisan
Calling	Career	Vocation
Universality	Replicable	Unique

Although both of these approaches are needed in any overall development strategy, one should not be confused with the other. One is not "better" than the other and nor can one be replaced by the other. Each has a different dimension and tackles different issues and phases in the life of communities.

Korten's Four Generations of Development Work:

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad's analysis of development from a rights perspective draws on some important work of David Korten which examines the "generational" overlaying nature of NGO development organisations and the inter-relationship between welfare (service delivery) development and rights. Korten describes development organisations as operating in a mixture of 'four generations' of approach.

1st generation work: First generation work typically involves the provision of relief and welfare services for beneficiaries. This is characterised by an apolitical approach where the NGO or service provider is characterised as the *doer*.

2nd generation work: Second generation work is characterised by what we refer to as community development. Typically this entails a bottom up, project based, empowerment approach where the NGO is seen as the *mobiliser*.

3rd generation work: Third generation work begins to focus on systems development. This is an approach where the more systemic causes of poverty affecting a group within society are identified and an advocacy approach is often adopted to generate policy and practice change to tackle the systemic causes of poverty. In third generation work the NGO is characterised as the *catalyst*.

4th generation work: Third generation work begins to focus on movement building and alliance building. This approach is characterised by linking local drivers of poverty and marginalisation to global institutions and processes. A feature of fourth generation work is often a rights based approach to development where the NGO role is seen as *activist/educator*.

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad's work spans all four of Korten's generations and as an organisation Oxfam Community Aid Abroad is active in each. Clearly the approach to development, based on an articulation and support for the rights of marginalised people, finds its proper expression in third and fourth generation work. Moreover each generation has a legitimate, linking and crucial role in the overall development task.

In Oxfam Community Aid Abroad's methodological approach, the concept and practice of capacity building is the sub text of Mezza method where the "banding" of individuals leads to public action for community good.

Capacity Building Activities as Development.

In development practice, capacity building means promoting and enacting four activities that are inter-related:

Extending the range of peoples relationships.

Development work is about building solid relationships with and between people. Extending the range of these relationships and hence peoples capacity to elicit support and resources is the starting point of the work.

Introducing new information in the context and process of building relationships.

Information comes in different forms and from different sources and can be a powerful tool for development. Information which builds capacity and leads to empowerment relates to peoples real experiences and social realities. It is woven into and builds upon the "togetherness" principles within development work.

Carefully introducing new resources within genuine partnership.

Development work with people is humble work. Capacity building can be a slow process driven by the understandings and timings of community ebb and flow. Resourcing, to be empowering, also needs to be humble, being mindful of proportion, trust, reciprocity and partnership.

Promoting individual and collective decision making.

Making decisions for yourself and with others is a part of the empowerment process within capacity building. Capacity building is not just for the selected few and as such is a part of the development process that belongs to a participatory democratic tradition. For better or worse the people decide for themselves.

Implicate in this approach to capacity building is the understanding that cultural values must be respected, that Indigenous cultures particularly have inherent wisdoms and ways of doing and being which are unique. Above all, to undertake development work, to build capacities and to empower voiceless and marginalised people requires trust in people and processes.

Capacity Building as a Political Process

Oxfam Community Aid Abroad believes it is important that the Committee recognises the critical link between capacity building and the creation of movements which express themselves in terms of broad rights based activist campaigns.

Even village level development work building solid relationships with and between people at a local level is a political process. Extending the range of these relationships and hence peoples capacity to elicit support and resources is the starting point of development work which ultimately manifests itself in movements for political policy and practice change at regional, national and international levels.

ENDS.