

Oxfam Working Lives

Enhancing Rural Livelihoods in Samoa



Oxfam New Zealand is working in partnership with Women in Business Development Incorporated (WIBDI) to improve livelihoods in rural Samoan communities through income-generating opportunities from organic farming.

Background

Samoa, one of New Zealand's closest neighbours, is spread over two main islands and is home to 18,000 people. Whilst Samoa is a popular tourist destination, 20 per cent of the population live in poverty, and six per cent live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than US\$1 per day.

Many Samoans find it difficult to access employment and economic opportunities. A large proportion of the population depend upon subsistence agriculture, and remittances from Samoan workers employed overseas remain important to the livelihoods of their families back home, comprising 25 per cent of the GDP. A large proportion of the population has limited access to basic services such as health and education.



Samoa has a very young population. Oxfam's work focuses on providing jobs and income opportunities at the rural level.

Photo credit: Jane Ussher/Oxfam

The challenge

Remote rural communities offer limited economic opportunities - many families struggle to earn a living. As a consequence, many people, especially young people, leave their village homes in search of jobs and a regular income. By moving to live in urban areas they are contributing to escalating social problems.

To contribute to the sustainable livelihoods of rural people, the village economy needs to be made a more attractive place to provide employment and a regular income.

Who we work with

Since 2001, Oxfam New Zealand has been working in Samoa with Women in Business Development Incorporated (WIBDI). Together, we aim to alleviate poverty and create real sustainable village economies as well as revitalise the agricultural sectors.

In Samoa, WIBDI focuses on providing opportunities for rural and vulnerable people to earn an income where they live and with the resources they have at their disposal, thereby lessening dependence on remittances for daily needs and encouraging young people to remain in their villages. WIBDI identifies opportunities for income generation and provides rural families with on-going training, supervision and technical support. They also provide access to microfinance, assist with organic and Fairtrade

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certification and facilitate links between rural communities and global markets.

Our objectives

To increase standards of living and self-reliance of rural families in village economies, Oxfam New Zealand and WIBDI focus on:

- Further strengthening the capacity of WIBDI to enable the organisation to appropriately support its ever-growing development projects and support regional networks.
- Establishing a strong Samoan organic farming industry based on fair trade principals, giving Samoan farmers prioritised access to niche international markets.
- Increasing exports of organic and Fairtrade products like coconut virgin oil, nonu, dried coconut products and bananas.

What we are doing

Oxfam New Zealand is working with WIBDI to support:

- Organic certification of farms to international standards.
- Regular (weekly/fortnightly) organic farming and budgeting training to new farmers.
- Monthly organic markets in Samoa to sell organic products domestically. This is part of an awareness programme of organics and fair trade in the country, which also aims to promote nationally the benefits of organic foods in the diet, as well as the benefits of ethical trade.



Oxfam and WIBDI are helping farmers to increase the export of organic and Fairtrade products such as coconut oil.
Photo credit: Jane Ussher/Oxfam



Oxfam is establishing a strong organic agricultural industry in Samoa, helping farmers to export organic produce such as bananas. **Photo credit:** Oxfam

- Working with private sector interests to assist WIBDI to expand their business into commercial exports.

What we have achieved so far

- There are currently 294 farms and eight processing units in the organic farming project. This number is ever growing with 178 more farmers on a waiting list.
- In 2008, WIBDI entered into a community trade relationship with Body Shop International who will buy all their virgin coconut oil requirements from rural Samoan farmers on the WIBDI organic project.
- Small but significant amounts, for rural village economies, of organically certified products are being exported to New Zealand, the UK and the US. Products exported include nonu juice, virgin coconut oil and trial shipments of Misiluki bananas.

What we need

This year, Oxfam has committed to raise NZ\$210,000 for this ambitious and important programme.

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