

## Inequality Action Guide

**THE 80 RICHEST PEOPLE OWN THE SAME WEALTH AS THE 3.5 BILLION POOREST PEOPLE**



Infographic/Oxfam GB

### Introduction

In 2015 the 80 richest people on the planet owned as much of the world's wealth as the poorest half of humanity. That's the same number of people who'd fit on a double-decker bus! Between 2013 and 2014 the wealth of these 80 people increased by \$668 million every day.

Economic inequality is increasing and is standing in the way of eliminating global poverty. However it would take only 1.5% of the combined wealth of all the world's billionaires to fund the shortfall in the health and education services of the world's poorest countries. There is therefore a link between inequality and poverty.\*

### Why is this happening now?

Like poverty, rising inequality is not natural or accidental. Instead it is the result of deliberate policy choices made in the last few decades and therefore can be changed. Rising inequality has two main causes. The first is the belief that the best policy for governments to follow is to reduce their intervention in their countries' economies. This is called 'market fundamentalism' and has weakened the rules and taxation needed to keep inequality under control, but is a policy followed by many of the world's countries. The second is that laws and decision making have been influenced by the wealthy. Money buys political power, which the richest and most powerful have used to strengthen their unfair advantages.

### What needs to change?

Rising inequality is eventually bad for everyone. Governments, supported by their people, can reject market fundamentalism, oppose the special influence of powerful elites, make rules and laws fairer for everyone and take action to level the playing field by introducing policies that redistribute money and power. Some governments, for example Brazil, have already had some success.



Campaigners demand the UK government ends offshore tax havens by taking action in London's Trafalgar Square. Credit: Andy Hall/Oxfam GB

### What can you do?

1. **Inform:** Teach others about inequality and support them to think critically about a controversial issue.
2. **Broadcast:** Get creative and raise awareness in your school and community.
3. **Influence:** Persuade decision makers to play their part in challenging rising inequality.

\*Statistics from Oxfam's [Even it Up Campaign](#)

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### 1. Inform

Inequality is a complex issue which is challenging to understand. So how would you explain inequality to other young people?

- Show young people the film '[Even It Up: The Rich and the Rest](#)' (2' 58"). Identify the main points and hold a discussion.
- Ask as many young people as possible what the word inequality means to them and create a wordcloud. Show it to others and see if they agree.
- Discuss the photos in the Critical Thinking Activity. What do the photos have in common? Do young people find these images shocking? Why?



*Inequality in Sao Paulo, Brazil.  
Credit: Tuca Viera*



*Equal for all? Health care in Ghana.  
Credit: Abbie Trayler-Smith/Oxfam GB*

### 2. Broadcast

Plan events and activities to raise awareness of the issue in your community.

- Raise awareness: Organise a Birth Rights exhibition in your school to show the impact of health inequality.
- Publicise your event: For example, organise a giant photo shoot or make a film to show in school. Decide the key messages you want to communicate.
- Spread your message wider: Invite the press, parents and other schools to your event. Write about it for the school newsletter, blog or website.

### 3. Influence

To give your actions a bigger impact, try to influence decision makers. Show them how much you care about challenging inequality.

- Write a persuasive letter to a politician or local representative asking them to do more to challenge inequality. It should be no longer than one page, present clear points and be persuasive. You could also ask local or national businesses or education leaders to support you.
- Decide your priority. Inequality is global. Decide whether your letter will be about a global issue, like Birth Rights, or whether it will have a more local focus.

#### More Action Ideas:

- Organise a film screening to get young people talking and thinking. There are suggestions [here](#) and [here](#).
- Research organisations working on inequality and organise a fundraiser for one whose values and projects you support.