



Walking the Talk on Women's Rights

An Overview of the Oxfam Canada Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012

Oxfam Canada's vision

Oxfam Canada believes that people together can create a fair world, free of poverty and injustice. A fair world respects the basic rights of all human beings to:

- earn a decent living to support themselves and their families
- enjoy basic education and health care
- get help in life-threatening disasters
- speak out for their rights
- be treated as equal.

Oxfam Canada's mission

Oxfam Canada builds lasting solutions to global poverty and injustice. We work with allies in Canada and around the world to change the policies and practices that perpetuate human suffering. We support organizations in poor communities overseas in their struggle to secure basic rights. Oxfam's advocacy and campaigns for just policies are rooted in the knowledge and experience gained in that struggle.

Committing to Action

Oxfam Canada is committed to making the changes in our policies and practice, programs and processes to make the greatest possible contribution to the goal of ending poverty and injustice.

Walking the Talk on Women's Rights sets out an action agenda for the next six years, from 2007 to 2012. It addresses not only what Oxfam does but how we intend to transform ourselves to increase our impact – focusing on women's rights, boosting our budget, strengthening our staff, mobilizing more members, and nurturing a culture of learning and leadership.

This plan contributes to the Oxfam International ten-year plan *Demanding Justice*, setting out Oxfam Canada's strategy to increase our alignment within Oxfam International, augmenting our contribution to and benefit from the confederation.

Considerable reflection and consultation with staff, members, allies, present and potential funders, and other Oxfam affiliates, as well as ongoing engagement with overseas counterparts, have contributed to the development of this plan. The Board has played a key leadership role, assessing Oxfam Canada's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and debating the critical decisions that form the cornerstones of the renewal process.

Strategic goal for 2007 – 2012

Oxfam Canada aspires to be a centre of excellence in capacity building linked to women's rights and gender equality, and a change agent that reflects our commitment to human rights and sustainable development in our own practice, promoting participation and effective, accountable governance, including equality among women and men, and respectful relations among members and staff. We strive to learn, to improve our practice and to increase our impact in solidarity with and support of our counterparts and allies in Canada and overseas.

By "centre of excellence", we mean that Oxfam Canada will have the analysis, expertise, tools, relationships and resources to provide leadership and support global learning on capacity building linked to women's rights and gender equality.

To realize our strategic goal, Oxfam Canada is committed to five inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing change goals.

Focusing on women's rights

Oxfam Canada will focus on women's rights and gender equality, working to ensure women are empowered with the capacity, tools, legislation and enabling environment to promote and defend their rights.

We believe the most effective way to strengthen our program – and advance our mission – is to focus our resources and expertise in support of women’s rights and gender equality. Working with overseas counterparts and our allies in Canada and around the world, we will support efforts to increase women’s power to access and control resources; build capacity and support women’s leadership and active citizenship; and change attitudes and legislation to promote equality.

Women’s rights and gender equality will inform every aspect of our work: program priorities; counterparts and allies; grant making and roles vis-à-vis partners; campaigns, lobby and advocacy work; public engagement and outreach activities; learning agenda; communications and fundraising; membership and volunteer program; and institutional policies and practice.

Boosting our budget

Oxfam Canada will double our income from private donors, governments and institutional donors by 2012, maintaining an appropriate balance among revenue streams.

We need to grow our capacity, expanding resources to support the work of counterparts and allies overseas and in Canada, increasing staff to improve program quality and impact, and strengthening our outreach and internal systems. The donor base will be expanded and diversified with a greater emphasis on major gifts, while funding will be sought from a wider range of government and foundation sources.

Strengthening our staff

Oxfam Canada will grow our staff numbers to more than 100 by 2012, increasing capacity and allowing greater specialization and administrative support.

We will build our capacity to attract, retain and develop the best possible staff in order to reach our potential as a knowledge organization and bring the greatest value to counterparts overseas and our allies in Canada and globally. Increased staff will allow more focused responsibilities and more specialized knowledge and skills.

Mobilizing more members

Oxfam Canada will increase our membership to 30,000 by 2012, supporting the active engagement of a vibrant, diverse constituency mobilized in support of our mission.

We are committed to greatly expanding our support base among Canadians, engaging them as members and supporting their involvement as part of a global movement for fundamental change. A strong, active membership contributes to Oxfam’s credibility and legitimacy and helps us reach out to new constituencies and broaden public support. We are committed to a comprehensive and coherent strategy, supported by adequate staff and resources, to engage more members, support their participation and document – and celebrate – their contribution to our mission.

Nurturing a culture of learning and leadership

Oxfam Canada will develop a culture of learning and leadership, supported by a system of accountability that allows us to demonstrate the impact of our efforts on women's rights and gender equality.

We will build a learning agenda to support deeper investigation, reflection and follow up while investing in knowledge management and information management systems that play a critical support role. Specialist staff will support monitoring, analysis and evaluation, and greater efforts will be made to document and disseminate results and showcase learning. Accountability to all stakeholders, including women and men living in poverty, will be strengthened and an integrated program framework adopted.

Making a difference

As a northern development agency, Oxfam Canada recognizes we have an *opportunity* to make an important contribution to fundamental change in the global South but we have a *responsibility* to help change Canada. For that reason, we take a multi-dimensional approach:

- working in relationships of trust with overseas counterparts to build capacity to secure basic rights, improve quality of life and promote positive and sustainable change
- supporting public engagement, advocacy and campaigning in Canada, promoting global citizenship and responsible corporate behaviour
- collaborating with Canadian and global allies to forge a global movement to end poverty and injustice
- providing emergency assistance and support to reconstruction and conflict resolution to people affected by disasters and conflict
- contributing to analysis and learning to engage in policy dialogue in Canada and globally
- learning from and building on the experience and analysis of our overseas counterparts and allies in Canada and around the world

Rooted in relations of respect with counterparts and allies, Oxfam Canada's approach to development is:

- rights-based
- asset-building
- people driven
- capacity focused
- gender-sensitive
- holistic and integrated
- environmentally responsible
- flexible and iterative
- HIV and AIDS aware
- collaborative

Along with other Oxfams, we have adopted a rights-based framework that supports the fulfillment and protection of all human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, civil and political rights, environmental rights and rights in international humanitarian law. Programs are conceived, delivered and evaluated using five interrelated 'aims' designed to ensure that all people can have the following entitlements:

- the right to a sustainable livelihood
- the right to basic services
- the right to life and security
- the right to be heard
- the right to an identity

Tapping the strength of Oxfam International

In working for change, we are hugely strengthened by our affiliation with Oxfam International. As one of thirteen Oxfams, we benefit greatly from the ability to tap the resources, research and relationships of other confederation members. We also bring an analysis and experience that enriches the whole, grounded both in our program and our understanding of the Canadian experience of decentralized decision-making.

Over the course of this strategic plan, Oxfam Canada will contribute to the change goals set out in ***Demanding Justice***, the Oxfam International Strategic Plan. The Oxfam International change goals for 2007 – 2012 are:

- **Economic Justice**
More women and men will realize their right to secure and sustainable livelihoods.
- **Essential Services**
The Millenium Development Goal targets on essential services will be achieved and people living in poverty, especially women and children, will realize their rights to accessible and affordable health, education, water and sanitation.
- **Rights in Crisis**
All women and men in humanitarian crises will be assured both the protection and the assistance they require, regardless of who or where they are or how they are affected, in a manner consistent with their human rights.
- **Gender Justice**
Many more women will gain power over their lives and live free from violence through changes in attitudes, ideas and beliefs about gender relations, and through increased levels of women's active engagement and critical leadership in institutions, decision-making and change processes.

Walking the Talk

Walking the Talk on Women's Rights sets out an agenda for action covering all aspects of Oxfam's work. While ambitious, the plan reflects our learning that to make substantive and sustainable improvements to the organization's capacity to fulfill our mission, significant changes are needed to every aspect of our policy and practice, processes and procedures.

To succeed in making a strategic contribution to the goal of promoting women's rights and gender equality, Oxfam Canada must reflect that commitment in our structures, culture and practice. Engendering our work – as it relates to program choices, membership engagement, marketing, human resources policy, funding strategies, management and much more – is critical to success. Adjustments to the plan will be made to reflect changing context or priorities and progress made.

Looking to our future

By 2012, Oxfam Canada will have:

- worked with partners and allies to empower more women to have the capacity, tools, legislation and enabling environment to promote and defend their rights

- established ourselves as a centre of excellence in capacity building linked to women's rights and gender equality within Canada, within Oxfam International and within the INGO community, bringing together expertise, analysis and partnerships in support of women's empowerment
- deepened our understanding and application of a rights-based approach to development, ensuring rights are built into program objectives and ways of working, from local to global levels, including advocacy, campaigning and humanitarian work
- significantly expanded and diversified our funding base, securing additional program funding to match donor contributions, and leveraging funding from public, institutional and government sources to make a greater contribution within Oxfam International
- strengthened our program in Canada, increasing our capacity to engage and support a larger and more diverse range of members in the different regions in which we have a staff presence, and consolidating a strong network of campus-based support groups as a key element of our youth engagement strategy
- made a significant contribution to public understanding of rights-based development and the importance of global citizenship with a stronger presence as a key ally and actor within the Canadian and global social movement
- demonstrated good practice with respect to knowledge management, building a culture of learning and sharing
- increased our capacity to demonstrate the impact of our work, investing additional resources in evaluation and learning, while also building our outreach and communications capacity to share this information
- strengthened our internal systems, policies and procedures to improve efficiency, effectiveness and productivity
- reduced our environmental footprint, modeling good practice with respect to sustainability
- increased active engagement by members in support of the organization's mission and effective governance
- created an environment in which staff and members feel valued and respected and are given the tools and support required to contribute fully to the achievement of our mission

Oxfam Canada has a tremendous opportunity to make a qualitative and quantitative leap forward over the course of the next six years. The ambition of our mission warrants bold action.