WE LIVE IN A RICH WORLD. YET MORE THAN A BILLION PEOPLE LIVE IN EXTREME POVERTY, AND THE GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR IS WIDENING. GENDER IS A MAIN PREDICTOR FOR WHO WILL BE POOR AND WHO WILL HAVE POWER.

CONSIDER:

- The majority of the world’s poor are women.¹
- Nearly two-thirds of the world’s 780 million people who cannot read are women.²
- In Pakistan and India, girls have a 30 to 50 per cent higher chance of dying between the ages of one and five than boys.³
- Less than 20% of landholders are women. In many poor countries it is less than 10%.⁴
- One out of three women and girls worldwide is estimated to have been a victim of violence or sexual abuse.⁵

If you don’t deal with gender justice issues you are only dealing with fifty percent of the problem. You still have to go back and deal with the other half.

Teresa Mugadza, Zimbabwean feminist and human rights activist

GENDER JUSTICE

Gender Justice is the goal of full equality and equity among women and girls and men and boys in all spheres of life. It is the result of women, jointly – and on an equal basis with men – defining and shaping the policies, structures and decisions that affect their lives and society as a whole. It is both an outcome and a process.

GENDER JUSTICE REQUIRES WE WORK TOGETHER ON TWO LEVELS:

1. To change societal attitudes and behaviour that lie at the heart of gender inequality
2. To change those laws, policies and government programs that discriminate against women and sustain gender inequality.

To achieve these goals requires a strong and empowered civil society. To this end, Oxfam works in partnership with civil society organizations (in particular, grassroots women’s organizations and networks) that promote and defend women’s rights in multiple spaces. Our purpose is to end poverty and establish equality between women and men.
**SIGNS OF CHANGE**

Oxfam Canada has worked for 50 years in international development and we have seen time and time again that women are leaders and change-makers with tremendous capacity to improve their lives and the lives of those around them. While there is much to be done to achieve full gender equality some global and national achievements provide reasons for optimism:

- There is global parity in primary education between girls and boys although tens of millions of children remain out of school.
- Maternal deaths are on the decline. An estimated 287,000 maternal deaths occurred worldwide in 2010, which represents a decline of 47 percent from 1990. Maternal health coverage has progressively increased in developing regions from 63 percent in 1990 to 71 percent in 2000 and then to 80 percent in 2010.

It is extremely important that we continue to build upon this momentum and ensure these changes are not lost.

**OXFAM'S WORK ON GENDER JUSTICE**

Oxfam Canada uses a rights-based, transformative approach to strengthen women and girls’ capacity to mobilize their own power and that of others.

We support women’s and civil society organizations that are working to achieve change in three main areas: the reduction of violence against women, economic empowerment and women’s leadership.

**ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**

**Labour Rights:** Sixty per cent of the world’s working poor are women. On average, they work more hours than men, sometimes double, often in the low-wage informal economy or in unpaid domestic work. Oxfam works alongside local women workers’ organizations to enforce and establish policies and laws that protect and support women in all their work.

**Food and Land Rights:** The United Nations states that more than 40 per cent of the world’s food is produced by women – over 80 percent in developing countries. Yet too many women are persistently poor and don’t have enough food. Power imbalances restrict their access to land, markets and credit. Oxfam works with local partners to increase women’s participation in decision-making bodies and their ability to access resources and influence policies they need for a sustainable livelihood. Oxfam campaigns to build a better food system that ensures everyone has enough to eat. We work to stop land grabs, reduce food price volatility, support sustainable farming, and ensure women participate in decision making and that women’s rights are at the center of food security initiatives.

**Climate Change:** Poor women are least responsible for climate change and most burdened by the impact, with few resources to adapt. Oxfam Canada works with local partners to ensure women’s knowledge, resources and practices are included in climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, while also influencing Canadian government policy at UN climate change negotiations.
**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread and acute human rights violations. It is a major cause of death, ill-health and disability. Violence prevents women and girls from escaping poverty by limiting their ability to access education, paid work and participation in political and public life.

Oxfam Canada works with partners to provide care, protection and justice for women experiencing violence, to overturn the social acceptance of violence against women and to hold governments accountable for policies relating to domestic and gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS.

**WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP**

A crucial barrier to achieving gender justice is the exclusion of women from decision-making positions in key institutions, structures and systems.

Oxfam Canada’s work on Transformative Leadership empowers women to speak up, assert their rights and claim access to resources, enabling women to assume leadership at all levels (economic, social, political, cultural) and in all domains (family, community, organizations, state and religious institutions, schools and the market).

**STORIES FROM OXFAM CANADA’S PARTNERS**

Common threads run through many of our partners’ stories, beginning with the importance of women coming together in an organized way to share, learn and support each other. Our partner profiles are a small sampling of the incredible strength and determination of women around the world who courageously work together to improve the lives of their children and their communities. Says Sahena Begum in Bangladesh, profiled in the Economic Empowerment leaflet, “We are not born to suffer; we are born to fight.”

**WHY IT MATTERS**

The research is clear: when women exercise their rights there is a positive impact on everything from access to education, food and health security to the environment, peace-building and good governance. All of us, women and girls, men and boys, have a stake in gender justice. Changing women’s position in the world means changing the world for the better.

**ENDING GLOBAL POVERTY BEGINS WITH WOMEN’S RIGHTS.**
ENDNOTES

1 Quoted from UN Women, http://www.unwomen.org/facts-figures/

2 UNIFEM, Gender Equality Now: Accelerating the Achievement of the Millennium Goals, 2008.


4 “An international comparison of agricultural census data shows that less than 20% of landholders are women. The situation is particularly grim in Western and Central Africa as well as the Near East and North Africa where generally less than 10% of landholders are women. Numbers are only slightly higher in Asia. In Eastern and Southern Africa and in parts of Latin America, women seem to have somewhat better access to land. In some countries up to 30% of individual land titles are held by women.” http://www.fao.org/economic/es-policybriefs/briefs-detail/en/?no_cache=1&uid=40497


7 http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview/mdg_goals/mdg5/

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