



OXFAM
Canada

VOLUNTEER SOLIDARITY HANDBOOK



Collaboration and partnership are at the core of Oxfam's work, both Internationally and here in Canada. This handbook acts as a guiding tool for Oxfam advocates to better understand what solidarity is, why it's important, and how to begin to act in solidarity within your local community.

This guide includes concrete examples of how Oxfam advocates can engage in solidarity actions, as well as a list of solidarity events you can plan to get involved with right away, over the course of the year. It also offers guidance on when and how you can seek the support of Oxfam staff in relation to solidarity activities.

WHAT IS SOLIDARITY?

BROAD DEFINITION: unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group. In addition to action, solidarity means recognizing that everyone experiences issues differently. There must be an active respect for difference.

- **REACTIVE SOLIDARITY:** actions that are in response to a crisis, an emergency situation, or another significant event in Canada or internationally

Examples: attending a Black Lives Matter vigil or Nepal earthquake vigil organized by the Nepali community

- **PROACTIVE SOLIDARITY:** actions that are regular or scheduled

Examples: annual Pride Marches, events for International Women's Day, or annual vigils for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls

- *Solidarity is not about talk or passive tolerance, but about intentional action*

HOW CAN OXFAM ADVOCATES ENGAGE IN SOLIDARITY WORK?

We have the opportunity, as Oxfam volunteer advocates who are active across the country, to stand in solidarity with activists and changemakers here in Canada. Sometimes we do this using Oxfam's voice and brand. Sometimes we do it without acknowledging Oxfam publically at all, but because we are inspired by Oxfam's values and beliefs.

BRANDED SOLIDARITY: There are events when several groups and organizations come together to raise awareness about an issue, celebrate progress, or try to push for policy change. These are often large rallies, or public demonstrations where participating groups are expected to have large banners with their logos, or wear branded t-shirts to show that their organization is behind the event message.

Example: Pride parades where groups are encouraged to represent their organizations

UNBRANDED: Unbranded solidarity events are often reactive—taking place when a community or movement of marginalized people are working to raise an issue, and you as an Oxfam advocate are there to support. These are events where your participation has been encouraged (directly or through a public call out), and where you are there to illustrate how many people are supportive of the message being shared, rather than bring forward the Oxfam brand.

This is an area where it's incredibly important for you to pay attention to the requests of the organizing community and their specific asks of how individuals showing solidarity or acting as allies should participate. If you still want to show that you are there as Oxfam at an unbranded solidarity event you could decide to wear a single Oxfam button. When in doubt about whether wearing the brand is appropriate, go unbranded. You can also use the solidarity flow chart placed at the end of this document and/or ask a member of the Oxfam campaigns team for their suggestions.

Example: Attending a vigil organized by a marginalized group, where your presence shows support but where Oxfam branding would distract from the focus of the event: that group's struggle.

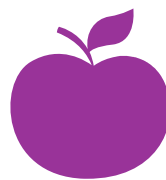
SOLIDARITY LOOKS LIKE:



Attending a vigil



Joining a march or parade



Providing a workshop, food or other supplies to a group organizing a demonstration



Helping a group set up or clean up after an event they are organizing

WHEN TO ORGANIZE A SOLIDARITY ACTION

Oxfam supporters across the country should support diverse movements in their communities with solidarity actions related to Oxfam’s mission and vision. Collaboration between movements is a key element of *intersectional social justice work.

Oxfam often deals with sensitive political issues that, if poorly communicated, could put our partners in the South, and here in Canada, in jeopardy or risk damaging Oxfam’s reputation. For this reason, we’ve listed some of the issues advocates should not participate in solidarity actions around. When in doubt, always consult with a member of Oxfam’s campaigns team.

Some of the issues Oxfam works on are sensitive and Oxfam may have changing and complex policies or messages on these issues. In these cases always seek guidance from a member of Oxfam’s campaigns team.

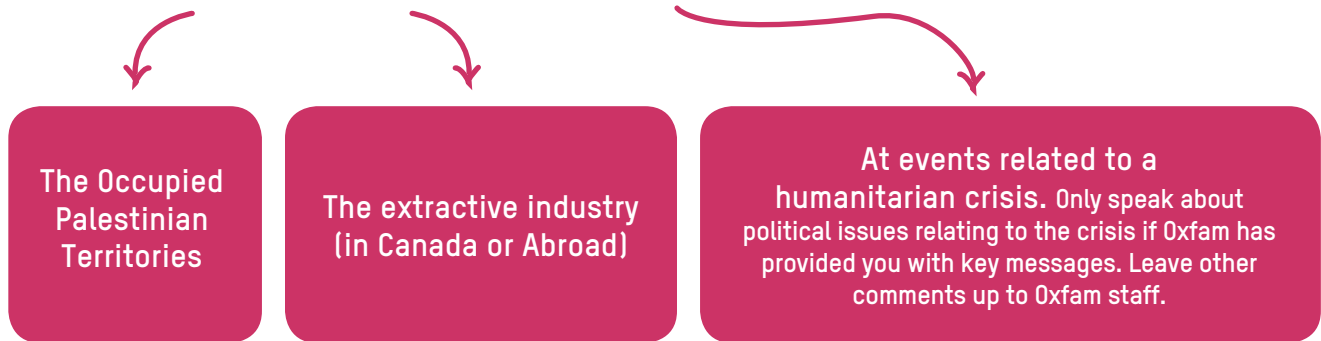
VOLUNTEER ADVOCATES SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN SOLIDARITY ACTIONS. . .

- On issues related to Oxfam’s vision and mission, including actions related to **gender justice, human rights, global inequality, humanitarian crises** and **environmental justice** .
- When they have been **invited** to do so, or where there has been a **public call** for participation/support.
- On **key dates** such as:

- Annual PRIDE parades (different dates in every city)
- International Women’s Day (Mar 8)
- Earth Day (Apr 22)
- May Day (May 1)
- 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (Nov 25 - Dec 10)
- World Refugee Day (Jun 20)
- National Aboriginal Day (Jun 21)
- National Day of Vigils to Remember Murdered and Missing Aboriginal Women (Oct 4)
- World Food Day (Oct 16)
- International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (October 17)
- International Transgender Day of Remembrance (Nov 20)
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities (Dec 3)
- Human Rights Day (Dec 10)

***intersectionality** is a concept coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the ways in which oppressive institutions—including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia and classism—are interconnected and must be examined and tackled in relation to each other. Solidarity actions allow Oxfam groups to connect their work to other intersecting social justice struggles, strengthening the broader Canadian and global movements for justice and equality.

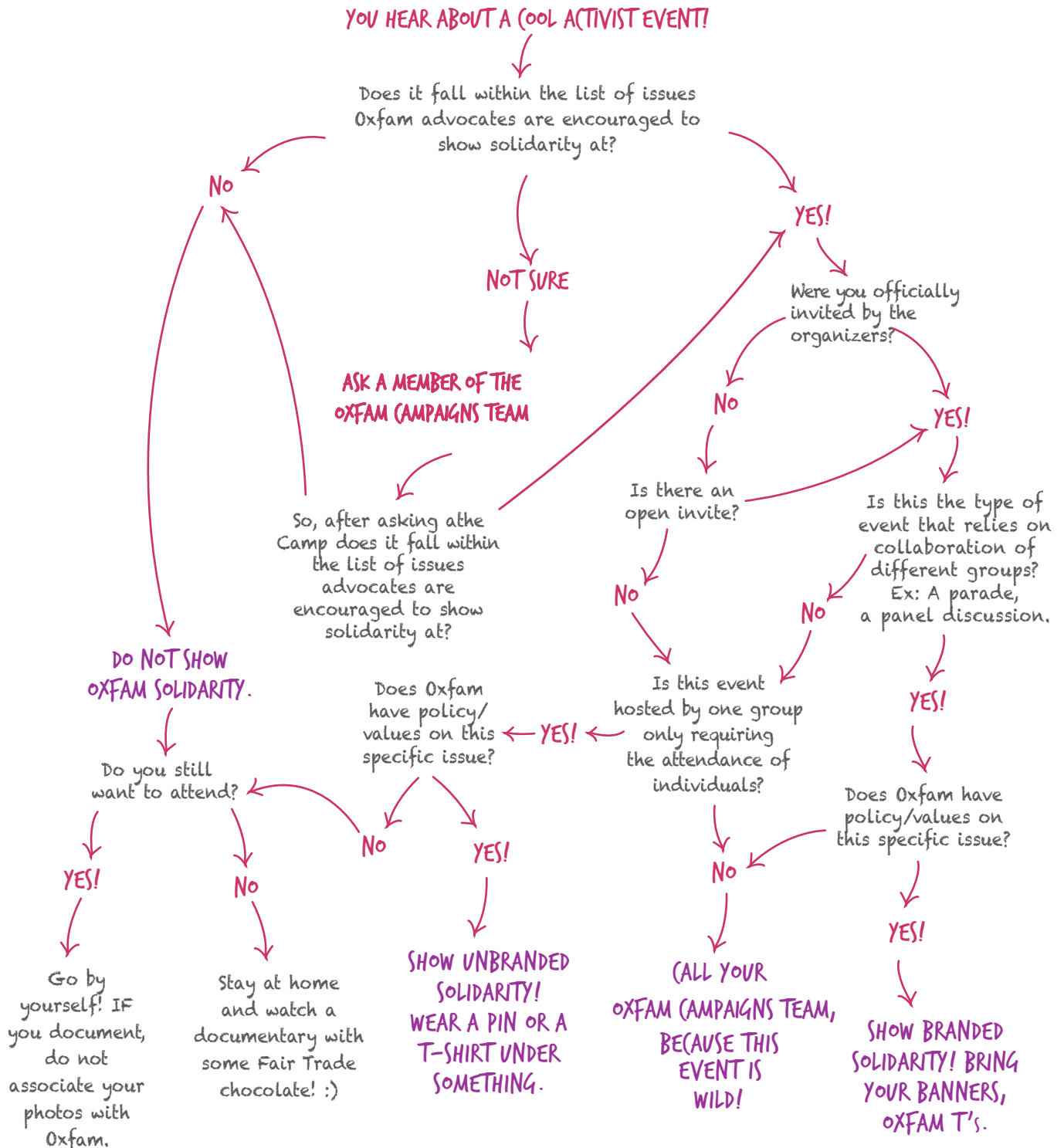
ISSUES GROUPS SHOULD LEAVE TO OXFAM STAFF TO DEFINE IF AND WHEN WE ORGANIZE ACTION.



WHY IT'S GOOD FOR OXFAM ADVOCATES TO PARTICIPATE IN SOLIDARITY ACTIONS?

- Solidarity actions offer important learning opportunities for advocates on the diverse ways folks are engaging in social change work—gaining exposure to new ways of organizing.
- Solidarity events provide further opportunity to showcase the issues we are dedicated to. You may not have to plan the event, but by showing up you can show that Oxfam cares! This will also help increase Oxfam's visibility in your community.
- Solidarity events are often larger scale because they involve multiple groups. Larger scale events are able to draw stronger media coverage and have the potential to raise greater awareness.
- Collaboration can help Oxfam advocates within a single community or across the country, remember that they are not working alone. This helps foster sustainability and prevent burnout.
- It helps create a larger front of support to let those in positions of power know which issues we feel are important.
- Solidarity events provide a great opportunity to network with like-minded individuals.
- Solidarity can help advocates deepen their engagement with issues they are working on by connecting their work to other movements/groups. Groups see how similar issues can be approached from many angles (highlighting how everyone experiences these issues differently!)

A QUICK TOOL FOR DECIDING WHETHER TO ORGANIZE A SOLIDARITY ACTION



HOW TO SHOW SOLIDARITY

Showing solidarity strengthens your work with Oxfam! Large or small, solidarity actions can help increase the visibility of a cause beyond what one group can do alone AND help you develop a deeper understanding of how diverse movements can support and influence each other. Demonstrating that many different groups are invested in an issue is key to influencing decision-makers—making solidarity actions a key component of your Oxfam advocate participation.

- 1** *Build solidarity actions into your annual calendar.* These actions deepen your understanding of a range of social justice issues and model Oxfam’s rights-based, longterm development approach. Oxfam believes that if all people can access their basic rights, they will be able to pursue their own vision for development. Our work is grounded in collaboration with local partners around the world.
- 2** *Keep your finger on the pulse of movements in your community.* A strong part of showing solidarity is knowing what’s going on in your local area. Sign up for local newsletters and follow local organizations and activists on social media and know that you can always support their work while still being an Oxfam representative through solidarity. Get inspiration on who to follow by checking out who is organizing the events mentioned in the “Key Dates” list on page 6 .
- 3** *Get a Group together and attend* in whatever way “attending” or “showing up” is defined by the organizing groups/individuals. Are they asking for people to march with them, wear a particular colour to show you are in solidarity, or even help set up or clean up after an event? Listen to the organizers about what the movements’ needs are, and if you are unsure how to support you can always reach out and ask.

TRANSFORMING SOLIDARITY ACTIONS INTO ALLYSHIP

Another reason why solidarity actions are important is that they are the building blocks for longer-term relationships between groups working for social justice. Although many of your solidarity actions may be one-off events, you may want to strengthen your relationships with some of the local organizations you support.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ALLY AND HOW DOES ALLYSHIP DIFFER FROM ONE-OFF SOLIDARITY ACTIONS?



An Ally is someone who works to support the struggle of a group affected by some form of oppression, but who doesn't actually belong to the group in question or who doesn't have first hand experience with that type of oppression.

Allyship is about consistent action, not a title.

Unlike participating in a one-off solidarity action, being an ally requires sustained action and regular learning and unlearning harmful attitudes in order to support the group affected by a particular form of oppression.

- ***Listening and educating yourself*** are some of the most important elements of allyship. Supporting a marginalized group of people means being open to hearing diverse

perspectives and calls to action from within the group.

- ***Ally is not a title you give yourself.*** Being in solidarity is something you strive for. Focus on the work and leave it up to the people you are supporting to decide if you are their ally.
- ***Allyship is not something you jump in and out of.*** It's a daily process that often involves having difficult conversations with people close to you when their actions are oppressive.
- ***Allies are open to being held accountable*** when they mess up.



Standing in solidarity is an incredibly important and powerful act. As Oxfam volunteers, and individuals working for social justice, solidarity is a fundamental component of creating universal change.



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