

FEMINIST PRINCIPLES

OXFAM GB

As an intersectional feminist ally, Oxfam believes in ending sexism and that women should be free of political, social, and economic oppression and exploitation. In support of this aim, our work will be guided by 11 principles:

1. I share power:

Be aware of the advantages and privilege some people/groups have over others due to social inequality (gender, race, sexual identity, class, standard of education) and how this can lead to unequal power. Challenge organisational culture and social norms that contribute to the power imbalance experienced by women – particularly Black and women of colour and younger women.

Principle in practice:

- **What can I do?** Give up your space on a discussion panel to someone whose voice is heard less often or think consciously about your privilege/power in discussions and avoid the impulse to dominate. Call out discriminatory practices and be proactive about changing them.
- **A step forward:** Oxfam's [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#) commits to the development of a workforce that's representative of the societies we serve, and where each employee feels respected and able to give their best. It is a demonstration of the importance placed on all staff being able to step forward and lead, particularly those groups less likely to occupy positions of power (women, BAME, LGBT+).

2. I challenge my behaviour:

Recognise that challenging sexism, racism or any oppressive ideology, begins with challenging yourself. It's important we look at our own conscious and unconscious bias and play an active part in correcting the inequalities that exist in our society.

Principle in practice:

- **What can I do?** Being non-sexist is fine, being anti-sexist is better. If you witness sexism, don't stop at not getting involved. Challenge it – or speak to a manager if you don't feel able to address it directly.

When we tolerate oppressive behaviour in others, we perpetuate a culture within our wider organisations/systems that is unsafe and unjust.

- **A step forward:** The Oxfam Let's Talk performance management framework highlights behaviours that are based on a feminist leadership model and emphasises the value of feminist behaviours for all of us to bring to our work.

3. I support the feminist movement:

Acknowledge the feminist activists and their organisations already having a huge impact and take care that our actions/policies don't undermine, duplicate, appropriate or overlook their work. Recognise our responsibility, as an international organisation, to promote gender equality in partnership with activists and Women's Rights Organisations (WROs).

Principle in practice:

- **What can I do?** Take a look at Oxfam's messaging framework for Gender Justice (coming soon). In the meantime, use Oxfam's publications, resources and training materials on Gender Justice to inform your work/conversations. Finally, take a little time to understand feminism. You don't have to be an expert, but a sense of the movement's size and complexity will help you be an effective ally.
- **A step forward:** Oxfam has adopted a feminist model of leadership and is looking to embed intersectional feminist principles for all staff to live by in their day-to-day work. We have been working in partnership with WROs through our programmes and campaigning, and actively track how much of our money goes to these organisations. We also work to create platforms that will amplify the messages and experience of feminist activists.

4. Nothing about us without us:

As an organisation working on women's rights, Oxfam can unintentionally take up the space of women's rights organisations (WROs). Oxfam aims to be on an equal footing with its partners, creating spaces for their own voices and experiences to be heard.

Principle in practice:

- **What can I do?** Make sure people affected by programmes and campaigns we support can participate in decisions about them and hold us accountable for how we show up. Work to create spaces where women, particularly Black and Women of Colour, and gender diverse people (including within our organisation) can speak for themselves, or in other words - #passthem.
- **A step forward:** Rather than dominating the discussion, we aim to work in partnership with feminist and WROs. For one of many examples, see this [report on funding for women's organisations](#).

5. Feminism is for everyone:

Society's unfair gender roles and stereotypes negatively impact all of us and it is up to all of us to dismantle this patriarchy. Remember that feminism is not about one gender coming out 'on top'. It is about equality.

Principle in practice:

- **What can I do?** Be feminist and proud, not just of the identity but the term itself. For some, 'feminism' still carries negative connotations but the more people who reject that and proudly adopt the label, the more the movement will achieve. Find at least one feminist principle that resonates with you and practice it in your work, home and social spaces.
- Put women's issues front and centre. Outdated masculinity can limit men's interests, self-expression or access to emotional support and this certainly needs addressing. However, sexual assault, domestic violence, sexism in the workplace, unpaid care work and laws limiting control over their bodies are still much more likely to affect women – issues so numerous and severe they need urgent action.
- Be an ally to women. A man's voice is still more likely to be heard in the average workplace, so if you are one of Oxfam's male employees, use your influence to advocate intersectional feminism e.g. purposely include women, especially Black and women of colour, in group conversations and don't allow them to be overlooked/talked over in meetings.
- **A step forward:** Oxfam's feminist leadership model underpins all its leadership training, which is for everyone. One area of focus is respectful feedback – to our colleagues, our managers and those we manage. Using unbiased and uplifting language, Oxfam encourages all its staff to empathise with others and focus on how to achieve the positive outcomes required.

6. There is no justice without gender justice:

The issues of economic, social and environmental justice that Oxfam works on can never be resolved without gender justice. Social and economic progression are interlinked and require the full participation, freedom and recognition of all.

Principle in practice:

- **What can I do?** Think about your area of work and consciously consider women, especially Black and women of colour, as part of all your process. For example, story-telling staff might profile a feminist organisation lobbying for gender-just climate change.
- **A step forward:** As part of its humanitarian work Oxfam uses a Safe Programming approach, which involves the design of inclusive responses and risk management. We look at the potential impact of an emergency on different groups (women, people with disabilities), but also the impact of how we deliver aid. There are numerous examples of this work on the [policy and practice website](#).

7. I champion diversity:

Encourage diversity and challenge any discrimination you might witness. There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle and our approach is intersectional, which means that we understand that prejudices often overlap e.g. on average BAME women not only earn less than white men, but also white women.

Principle in practice:

- **What can I do?** Think consciously about whether your hiring process is as inclusive as it could be e.g. look at a variety of places to advertise vacancies to attract a diverse range of candidates, and ensure men and women are equally represented on recruitment selection panels. But don't forget to look beyond recruitment and consider the ongoing training, progression and retention of diverse groups. Use Oxfam's [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#) to guide you in creating an inclusive work environment.
- **A step forward:** Oxfam's Leadership Team has committed not to take part in male-only discussion panels. Our [trainee scheme](#) has been hugely successful at attracting and recruiting diverse candidates. We also have a hugely diverse volunteer base, in terms of age (14 - 90+), gender and ethnicity, and offer opportunities for vulnerable adults, people with learning difficulties and ex-offenders.

8. I value safety:

Every person working for or with Oxfam has the right to a safe environment. No form of abuse, sexual, racist or otherwise, will ever be tolerated. This applies in both physical and online spaces. Our staff can feel safe to report any incidences of abuse or bullying – we have a zero tolerance on no action for all cases reported and will ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For Oxfam, safety should not just be a priority but a way of life.

Principle in practice:

- **What can I do?** If you witness abuse, be sure to report it. Promote Oxfam's whistleblowing hotline and use it if necessary. Make sure colleagues have undertaken Health & Safety inductions and that you and everyone in your team are familiar with policies like lone-working and incident reporting.
- **A step forward:** Oxfam's safeguarding is based on a survivor-centred approach, which always puts the survivor's experience and their need to feel valued and safe, at the centre of their work. This ensures that their voice is heard and that they are empowered within any safeguarding processes that may take place, with ongoing and active consultation and consent sought at each stage.

9. I want a supportive environment:

Actively work towards a supportive environment by taking care of your emotional and physical wellbeing and encouraging others to do the same.

Principle in practice:

- **What can I do?** Try to maintain a healthy work-life balance, taking time in toils when you have worked extra hours and speaking up if your workload is getting too heavy. Look out for signs of stress in colleagues and offer support. If you manage others, try to role-model Oxfam's commitment to work-life balance by avoiding too many extra hours. Try to set deadlines/work schedules in a way that respects unpaid care responsibilities e.g. childcare. Finally, remember to ask your staff about their wellbeing and be ready to talk or to signpost them to appropriate resources.
- **A step forward:** Oxfam has a range of services available to staff, including staff health. Staff networks are available for people to come together and discuss issues, and there are range of ways to connect with colleagues (including internal comms).

10. I believe in freedom of expression:

Embrace the freedom of yourself and others to articulate opinions and ideas without the need for approval or fear of retaliation. While no form of discrimination will be tolerated at Oxfam, we must all support each other in our continued learning as intersectional feminist allies.

Principle in practice:

- **What can I do?** Show colleagues you value their opinion and encourage an inquisitive attitude. If you manage staff, facilitate training that will help increase their confidence and empower them to speak up.
- **A step forward:** The Gender Leadership Programme, and other leadership training programmes are designed to enable participants to build confidence in their own perspective, and to enable them to share this to develop their own and others' learning.

11. Eliminate gender-based violence:

Oxfam sees gender-based violence as one of the most prevalent violations of human rights worldwide. Work in partnership with feminist and women's rights organisations, young people and men, as a way of fighting the social norms that foster and normalise violence.

Principle in practice:

- **What can I do?** Everyday sexism perpetuates an environment in which small abuses against women and girls are tolerated. Challenge [everyday sexism](#) whenever you see it.

A step forward: Oxfam looks to hold duty bearers (those obligated to respect and promote human rights) accountable for meeting international standards. They will be asked to develop and implement laws/policies that address gender-based violence, and to support survivors in their journey to recovery.