Oxfam actions in support of
International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness
(Istanbul Principles)
110916

Parallel to the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness process, civil society organizations (CSOs) have been reviewing our own development practice with a view to ensuring we reflect in our actions the same principles and standards we advocate for other development actors: governments, donors, multilateral agencies, the private sector and others.

The culmination of this reflection was the adoption of the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness (the Istanbul Principles) in September 2010 and the guidelines to help give substance to these principles, captured in the Siem Reap CSO Consensus, agreed in June 2011.

To undertake a thorough assessment of Oxfam's performance against the Istanbul Principles would require an extensive and rigorous evaluation of the development practice of each of its 15 affiliates.[1]

Instead this paper provides an initial overview of Oxfam's efforts to set in place policies, priorities and systems which promote good practice and support for and compliance with the Istanbul Principles and the accompanying guidelines.

In offering these comments, it is important to acknowledge that within a shared framework – Vision, Purpose and Beliefs; Code of Conduct; Program Standards; Partnership Principles; and others – there are different ways of working within and among Oxfam affiliates. It is also important to note that in adopting a Single Management Structure, Oxfam is moving to ensure more consistent program practice, increasing coherence and transparency and promoting greater adherence with Oxfam codes, policies and standards – all of which align with the Istanbul Principles.

Foundation Documents

Oxfam has adopted a number of policies, standards and guidelines that relate directly to the Istanbul Principles. As well, Oxfam is signatory to a series of relevant CSO codes and standards.

Internal

Code of Conduct
Program Standards (including humanitarian and campaigns standards)
Partnership Principles
Southern Campaigning and Advocacy Guidelines
Policy on Program Evaluation

Purpose, Vision and Beliefs
Strategic Plan – Demanding Justice

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[1] Such an undertaking is not feasible at this time but as an interim measure, Oxfam reports on many of these principles as part of the Global Reporting Initiative in compliance with the International NGO Accountability Charter.

External

INGO Accountability Charter
ICRC NGO Code of Conduct
People in Aid Code of Good Practice

The Istanbul Principles

1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice
2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women's and girls' rights
3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation
4. Promote environmental sustainability
5. Practice transparency and accountability
6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity
7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning
8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

Respect and promote human rights and social justice

Oxfam
- takes a rights-based approach to development and humanitarian aid and reflects that commitment in our Foundation documents
- has adopted Demanding Justice as the title and goal of its strategic plan
- includes policy, advocacy and campaigning work as central to its program
- identifies active citizenship as central it its theory of change and a foundation to its program
- supports the active participation of CSOs in the global South, including women's organizations, networks and movements, and indigenous peoples
- has advocated for free, prior and informed consent by communities
- is working to demonstrate the impact of its work on the attainment of human rights by women and men, girls and boys in all their diversities

Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women's and girls' rights

Oxfam
- has identified Gender Justice as one of the four change goals in its Strategic Plan
- tracks its programming and spending on several strategic change objectives linked to gender equality, women's rights and gender based violence
- has identified gender equity as an objective among its Program Standards
- has addressed the importance of gender analysis and gender-disaggregated data in its Program Standards and planning guidelines
- provides significant funding to women's organizations, women's movements and organizations addressing the strategic needs of women and girls, men and boys
- works to promote women's leadership and participation in its development program, humanitarian action and campaigning and advocacy
- affirms its commitment to gender justice in its Foundation documents and Code of Conduct

Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation

Oxfam
- promotes active citizenship in its programming, campaigning and humanitarian action
- has identified active citizenship as an objective among its Program Standards

- commits that program strategies will be created in a participatory and collaborative manner in its Program Standards
- tracks its programming and spending on several strategic change objectives linked to voice, participation and identity
- has identified citizen participation and capacity-building of CSOs as central to its work
- supports the work of CSOs including community-based organizations and popular movements
- promotes pro-poor policies and the participation of marginalized communities in policy and political action
- affirms its commitment to people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation in its Foundation documents and Code of Conduct

Promote environmental sustainability

Oxfam
- has supported a wide range of development programming aimed at increasing sustainability
- has worked with communities to increase resilience through mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction
- has done extensive policy, advocacy and campaign work in support of climate justice
- has provided funding and support to partners and allies to support action on climate
- monitors, reports on and takes action to reduce its own carbon footprint
- commits itself to promoting environmental sustainability in its Foundation documents

Practice transparency and accountability

Oxfam
- is a founding signatory to the International NGO Accountability Charter
- reports annually using the Global Reporting Initiative NGO Supplement which allows comparisons among NGOs and with corporations and multilateral agencies
- is a signatory to a number of codes and standards globally and at the national level against which it reports publicly
- has identified accountability to people living in poverty in its Foundation documents and Program Standards
- has adopted Program Standards to demonstrate accountability to the people it serves
- has implemented a Single Management System to reduce complexity and achieve increased impact, efficiency and effectiveness
- has adopted a Policy on Program Evaluations that requires publication of external evaluations
- publishes its annual reports and financial statements to its web sites
- commits in its Foundation documents to being accountability for the impact of its actions on people and their economic, social, political and cultural rights.
- affirms that commitment in its Code of Conduct
- reaffirms this commitment as a signatory to the ICSOs position on Accountability
- has endorsed and supports the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)

Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity

Oxfam
- affirms its commitment to partnership in its Foundation documents and Code of Conduct
- has adopted a statement of Partnership Principles
- has adopted as a Program Standard "programs rely upon partnership with autonomous, independent, locally accountable organizations and ensure that these partnerships are mutually

empowering, cognizant of power imbalances between partners, and focused on mutual growth, organizational development, and institutional strengthening"

- through its Single Management System is working to clarify expectations, contract scope and mutual accountability process
- sets out commitments in its Southern Advocacy and Campaigning Guidelines that emphasize the importance of working in relations of partnership and solidarity with partners and allies
- provides funding and encouragement to networks and movements and supports their participation on global political fora
- is working to reduce excessive back-donor requirements and streamline funding and reporting processes

Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning

Oxfam
- commits itself in its Program Standards to invest in participatory, evidence-based learning
- sets out accountability mechanisms in its Single Management System supported by its approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning
- provides significant resources (training, funding, documentation) to partners and allies to share lessons and strengthen the capacity of CSOs
- has promoted approaches to sharing knowledge and promoting learning that are sensitive to different circumstances and cultures, mindful of gender, ethnic and other dimensions of diversity
- invests in improving its own practice and in making that learning available to others
- commits itself in its Foundation documents to learning from others in a way that will increase impact
- commits itself in its Code of Conduct to an organizational culture of search for best practice, linking and learning

Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

Oxfam
- commits itself to helping create positive sustainable change in its Foundation documents
- devotes significant energies and resources to raising awareness and mobilizing action in tackling the underlying causes of poverty and injustice
- engages in policy dialogue, grounding its policy and advocacy work in the experience and analysis of its partners and programs
- works with the private sector to influence its poverty footprint and to enlist its support for pro-poor change
- engages partners and communities in the design, implementation and evaluation of strategies and programs
- builds on the assets of a community and invests heavily in building the capacity of partners and CSO actors
- promotes effective states and the capacity of citizens to hold states to account for creating the conditions in which citizens can exercise their full range of rights
- works with partners and CSOs to increase their financial viability, sustainability and autonomy
- uses its influence to advocate pro-poor changes in policy and practice