



## ISTANBUL PRINCIPLES FOR CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

### 2 EMBODY GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY WHILE PROMOTING WOMEN AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Civil Society Organizations are effective as development actors when they promote and practise development cooperation embodying gender equity, reflecting women's concerns and experience, while supporting women's efforts to realize their individual and collective rights, participating as fully empowered actors in the development process.



Photo: Lucy Davies/Oxfam UK

### Gender strategy and community of practice: Oxfam-Québec

Oxfam is an international confederation of 17 organizations (Oxfam-Québec is one affiliate) working together in more than 90 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty. We work directly with communities and seek to influence the powerful to ensure that poor people can improve their lives and livelihoods, and have a say in decisions that affect them.

## CHALLENGE

The erosion of gender equality commitments is a risk that all international cooperation organizations face. Being an organisation actively committed to putting gender justice and women's rights at the heart of all its development, humanitarian and campaigning work means implementing a long-term transformative process at the organizational level. This transformative process should target 4 key areas: political will, organizational culture, technical capacities and accountability.



## RESPONSE



In 2007, in addition to keeping gender equality as a cross-cutting theme, Oxfam-Québec adopted gender justice as one of five change goals in its strategic plan. It carried out a participatory gender audit, which involved everyone working for the organization. Following this audit, Oxfam-Québec developed a new gender justice policy and associated action plan, which addressed the four key areas noted above, and engaged all personnel in its implementation.

## LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES

The gender audit drove Oxfam-Québec to implement systemic changes to better integrate gender equality into all of its work. These changes highlighted the major roles played by institutional culture, organizational politics, and organizational processes in gender equality. In addition, the organization pursued a set of initiatives to enhance the quality of both its gender justice programming - as a stand-alone issue - and its mainstreaming of gender issues in the rest of its work. To this end, Oxfam-Québec strengthened its organization's gender justice theories of change and intervention strategies, and developed gender program standards. These steps are crucial to enabling continuous improvement and impact in gender equality and women's rights programming.



# MAINSTREAMING/KNOWLEDGE SHARING



Oxfam-Québec's internal strategies include team training and providing expert support, tools to mainstream gender equality into the project cycle, efforts to build on lessons learned and systematize promising approaches within the organization, and promoting awareness and ownership of gender justice issues. In addition, Oxfam-Québec created an internal gender justice community of practice that brings together its gender specialists from headquarters and overseas to exchange ideas and support continuous learning and joint knowledge-building among peers. As part of the Oxfam family, Oxfam-Québec also participates in gender justice working groups that aim to continuously improve theories of change that underlie interventions, and improve the quality of gender equality programs and projects.

Externally, Oxfam-Québec is one of 12 founding members of "Genre en pratique," a community of practice associated with the Comité québécois femmes et développement (CQFD) of the Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale. The community gathers and exchanges knowledge to strengthen gender equality mainstreaming capacities. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has funded the community of practice since its inception in 2009-2010.

## NEXT STEPS

Oxfam-Québec continues its reflection, internally and within the Oxfam family, on theories of change that underlie its gender justice interventions and the quality of its programs. This work aims, in part, to strengthen the transformational aspect of its approaches, and to allow the organization to contribute significantly and effectively to gender equality and the advancement of women's rights.



## FURTHER INFORMATION

Oxfam-Québec's gender justice policy (in French only)  
<http://oxfam.qc.ca/fr/publications/politiques/justice-entre-les-femmes-et-les-hommes>

"Genre en pratique" community of practice (in French only) <http://www.aqoci.qc.ca/spip.php?article327>

Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Canadian Co-operation: Challenges and Perspectives report  
[http://www.aqoci.qc.ca/IMG/pdf/2010\\_03\\_18\\_actesen.pdf](http://www.aqoci.qc.ca/IMG/pdf/2010_03_18_actesen.pdf)

Gender Equality, Promise to Practice: A Study of the Progress Toward Gender Equality of CCIC Members, October 2008, 23 p. Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC), David Kelleher and Rieky Stuart.

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CARE, CCI, CECI, Development and Peace, Fondation Paul Gérin Lajoie, Canada World Youth, L'Œuvre Léger, Oxfam-Québec, Oxfam Canada, SACO, SUCO and CCIC.

Go here for more examples of how Canadian civil society is improving its development practice: <http://www.ccic.ca/IP-case-studies.php>