

## Position Policies

Position policies are “statements for wide public dissemination of the organisation’s analysis, policy perspectives and the social justice measures we advocate as well as the structural causes of poverty and injustice we identify” [GOV2.3]. They are a statement of the organisation’s position on “issues of public concern on which it is important for the organisation to have a consolidated position” [GOV 2.11].

Because these positions are developed through consultation with members and supporters, staff and other significant stakeholders, as well as external expert opinion, they are an important accountability mechanism. Notwithstanding, Oxfam Australia’s Position policies are consistent with those of Oxfam International.

### Position Policies

POS 1	Global position policy	Nov 2000
POS 2.1	Meaning of Development	Oct 2008
POS 2.2	Human Rights Approach to Development	June 2001
POS 2.2.1	Rights of Indigenous Peoples	Oct 2008
POS 2.2.1.1	Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Australia	Oct 2008
POS 2.3	Globalisation	May 2010
POS 2.3.1	Trade and Development Policy	Oct 2008
POS 2.3.2	Climate Change, Development and Social Justice	May 2011
POS 2.3.3	Australia’s Response to all people seeking refuge	Oct 2008
POS 2.3.4	Engagement with the Private Sector	Feb 2006
POS 2.4	Armed Conflict and Development	May 2003
POS 2.5	HIV and AIDS	June 2006
POS 2.6	Gender Justice	March 2012
POS 2.7	Humanitarian Response Policy	Oct 2007

## Policy Of The Board



**Type: Position policy**

**Title: Global position policy**

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Policy Serial No. : POS 1  
Date of Adoption: Nov 2000

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**Oxfam Australia's vision is of a 'fair world in which people control their own lives, their basic rights are achieved and the environment is sustained'. Our experience and analysis leads us to:**

1. Support community development programs that aim to assist people to achieve basic rights and nurture independent and environmentally sustainable, democratic communities
2. Advocate for social justice measures and the elimination of structural causes of poverty and injustice.

# Policy Of The Board



**Title: Meaning of Development**

**Type: Position policy**

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Policy Serial No. : POS 2.1  
Date of Adoption: Mar 2001  
Amended: Oct 2008

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## **The Problem:**

Oxfam Australia observes that 'development' has a range of definitions, many of which are problematic since they suggest that development is just, or mainly, about an increase in economic growth or an increase in the ownership of material goods. Indeed some approaches to 'development' can lead to the unsustainable exploitation of the environment or human communities. Furthermore some usage equates development with Westernisation or suggests that development is something done to others by outside agencies.

## **Oxfam Australia's Principles**

Oxfam Australia's view is that development should be an ongoing, dynamic and complex process by which communities and individuals within them are empowered to use the necessary knowledge and organisational skills to sustainably share and enhance their resources and to bring about positive change for the benefit of all their members. Development should be about the realisation of rights, including economic, political, cultural, gender and social rights and aimed at ending poverty, inequities, suffering and injustice. This type of development in an interdependent world will increasingly require the fostering of active citizens worldwide, who can hold governments, global institutions, NGOs and private sector companies to account.

Consequently, Oxfam Australia calls for Development that is people and community centred, sustainable, culturally sensitive and equitable and that builds active citizens and effective, accountable states.

# Policy Of The Board



**Type: Position policy**

**Title: Human Rights Approach to Development**

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Policy Serial No. : POS 2.2

Date of Adoption: June 2001

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## **The Problem**

Oxfam Australia acknowledges that without a respect for, and an understanding and promotion of human rights, there can be no real solution to poverty. While governments and various sectors of society fail to provide the frameworks to support the realisation of human rights for people and communities, there can be no long-term eradication of poverty.

## **Oxfam Australia Principles:**

In recent times Oxfam Australia has emphasised the use of a human rights framework in our work. A rights based approach to development empowers people to demand justice as a right, not as charity. We believe that the following human rights are central for true and sustainable development:

- The right to a sustainable livelihood.
- The right to basic services.
- The right to life and security.
- The right to be heard.
- The right to an identity - gender and diversity.

These human rights must be seen in the context of the international human rights instruments including (but not limited to) the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), International Covenant Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC). The rights in these documents are interconnected, indivisible and universal.

Oxfam Australia employs a multifaceted approach to the realisation of human rights including working towards the empowerment of communities to determine their own futures, lobbying and advocating for fairer policies and practices, and educating and raising awareness in the Australian community of the myriad occurrences of poverty, and the fundamental factors behind its institutionalisation and ongoing spread throughout the world.

## Policy Of The Board

### **Consequently, Oxfam Australia calls for:**

Principled leadership by government and legislators, who must provide the framework for the establishment of a culture which sets a high store on human rights. National governments have a responsibility to legislate domestically in support of the international human rights instruments and play a proactive role with neighbours, regional partners and the like in the promotion, protection and institutionalising of rights. Through leadership and support for human rights, governments lay the necessary foundations for civil society to take up the mantle of human rights education and awareness. We also call on corporations, the business and community sector to ensure that the development that they are involved in is supportive of the realisation of human rights. A human rights approach necessitates a consistent and wide-reaching commitment to the realisation of a just and equitable society, free from prejudice and discrimination of any kind.

**Title: Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

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Policy Serial No. : POS 2.2.1  
Date of Adoption: 28 May 2004  
Amended: Oct 2008

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**The Issue:**

**Oxfam Australia observes that:**

In many cases Indigenous peoples worldwide are structurally excluded and disenfranchised. This reflects the crucial interrelationship between land justice and cultural, economic and social rights, and in turn, political and civil rights. The loss of land and language for Indigenous communities results in economic and cultural marginalisation. In many countries, there is no legal framework through which Indigenous rights can be addressed. At the same time Indigenous philosophies, languages, histories and systems of economics are a wellspring of cultural value that make a unique contribution to global civic society.

Nonetheless Indigenous Peoples are disadvantaged in putting their political messages before the public. Indigenous Peoples often have smaller and often fragmented populations. These problems are compounded by the fact that the vast majority of colonising and non-Indigenous peoples are often not aware of Indigenous Peoples' special relationship to land, of their rights to culture and language or of the centrality of self-determination to their struggle. In some countries Indigenous Peoples are actively discriminated against by the broader society and denied citizenship.

The issue of Indigenous Peoples' disadvantage is global and evident in most countries where Oxfam Australia works. There are significant obstacles to Indigenous Peoples achieving the same level of opportunity as non-Indigenous citizens.

**Oxfam Australia Principles:**

**Our view is:**

Indigenous visions can contribute values and structures for a more inclusive civic society, as they draw attention to core values of relationship, not only amongst people in communities, but with the land. Indigenous Peoples must be seen and recognised, and their issues made familiar and real in political processes and civic society as a whole.

The corpus of international rights-based frameworks such as the International Labour Organisation's (ILO's) 169 Convention and the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) reflect Indigenous Peoples' priorities and provide a foundation for Oxfam Australia's work in this area. As a member of the Oxfam International confederation, Oxfam Australia's work is also aligned with the strategic aim for equal rights and status to cultural and other minorities that are oppressed or marginalised because of their identity.

## Policy Of The Board

Self-determination is central to working with Indigenous Peoples, and Oxfam Australia's role is to support Indigenous organisations in making decisions about their own development. Direct consultation with Indigenous groups should be sought through the whole cycle of policy and program. Tasks should be approached in a way that results in ongoing and reciprocal learning.

As a non-Indigenous organisation it is most appropriate for Oxfam Australia to work within rights-based frameworks when attempting to highlight links between indigeneity, poverty and suffering at all levels. This includes a commitment to the rights of women and children, for example, even when these may be in contradiction with specific cultural traditions.

Land justice must inform program and advocacy work, so as to provide decision-makers and the community with credible relevant information about the land justice issue, and to influence and enhance public debate and facilitate good public policy decision-making.

### **Consequently, Oxfam Australia calls for:**

Pressure to be exerted on governments at an international level, to address the structural inequality faced by Indigenous Peoples, and specifically, to endorse and implement UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. It is important that Australia advocate policies of self-determination in a form that gives voice to Indigenous People's concerns, and against the unauthorised exploitation of resources located within, or affecting Indigenous Peoples' territories.

Non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities to commit to genuine reconciliation that builds a solid foundation for living together peacefully and equitably.

### **Appropriate Community-based Strategies:**

Oxfam Australia should focus on Indigenous communities in Australia, with a view to understanding Indigenous movements and rights in an internationalised context and responding through UN and associated bodies. Oxfam Australia should aim to develop a distinctive competence in Indigenous rights through increasing our work with and facilitating exchanges between Indigenous Peoples, enhancing staff capacity in relation to Indigenous rights and increasing advocacy work in Australia and through Oxfam International on Indigenous rights.

Oxfam Australia's approach should draw attention to formal recognition and protection in legislation and constitutional instruments, while rights-based advocacy should emphasise Indigenous People's right to self-determination over their use of language, culture and the right to practice customs and traditions where these are consistent with internationally-accepted human rights.

It is a strategic priority to co-ordinate advocacy and long-term development interventions with Indigenous Peoples and their allies to increase impact through bringing about significant and lasting changes in the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Coordinated programming and advocacy may lend itself to better networking and consultation with Indigenous People and building the capacity of Indigenous organisations to advocate on their own behalf.

# Policy Of The Board



**Type: Position Policy**

**Title: Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Australia**

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Policy Serial No. : POS 2.2.1.1

Date of Adoption: 28 May 2004

Amended Oct 2008

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## **The Issue:**

### **Oxfam Australia observes that:**

Indigenous Australians, as with other Indigenous populations in the world, are disproportionately affected by issues of poverty, poor health, poor education and employment opportunities and problems of alcohol misuse, substance misuse and violence.

The disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians has resulted largely from a colonial experience that differentiates them from the Australian community. Aboriginal people have suffered loss of land, language, culture, and the lives of their community members, for more than 200 years.

Successive Australian government policies have severely eroded the capacity of Indigenous communities to function effectively and practice self-determination. Consistent with Article 3 - 6 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Oxfam Australia affirms its support for self-determination for Indigenous Peoples which include the rights to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."; and "The right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State". These functions include the specific right to exercise autonomy or self government as well as have access to the means for financing these roles. Australian governments have been slow to recognise and respect the rights of the Indigenous Peoples of this country, resulting in serious threats to the maintenance of Indigenous culture and heritage.

Efforts over the past forty years to overcome entrenched poverty and disadvantage in Indigenous Australia have had little impact.

In Australia, there has never been a treaty with Aboriginal people to provide a basis for a legal or negotiating framework. Issues of reconciliation and the need for a treaty have been the focus of public debate for many years, but these have still not reached satisfactory outcomes for many Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

While there has been some progress in the areas of land rights, native title and heritage protection, there has also a winding back of national representation of the interests of Indigenous Australians. Indigenous communities still suffer significant disadvantage in comparison to the rest of the Australian population, coupled with a lack of effective bodies to further the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in government forums.

### **Oxfam Australia principles:**

#### **Our view is:**



## Policy Of The Board

Oxfam Australia recognises that dispossession; racism and discrimination have systematically disadvantaged and marginalised Indigenous communities in Australia. Self-determination, native title, reconciliation and the need for a treaty must inform our program and advocacy work, taking our learning from Indigenous organisations.

Oxfam Australia can assist Indigenous organisations in bringing a greater understanding of Indigenous issues to mainstream Australian society and political frameworks. It is most appropriate for Oxfam Australia to work with and in support of Indigenous communities and organisations around Australia.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders must be seen and recognised as part of the Australian community, their history, traditions and culture accepted as an integral part of this nation's heritage. The issues affecting Indigenous People in Australia need to be debated and discussed as part of Australian civil society, and acted upon within our political processes.

Experience in community development both in Australia and in developing countries has highlighted the effectiveness and sustainability of programs that address the real needs of communities and ensure the commitment of communities to the programs. This occurs when communities have a significant role in the design, implementation and governance of the programs.

As a non-Indigenous organisation it is most appropriate for Oxfam Australia to work within rights-based frameworks when attempting to highlight links between indigeneity, poverty and suffering at all levels. Where there is an inconsistency between fundamental human rights and Indigenous cultural practices, Oxfam will work in a manner which is consistent with the achievement of fundamental human rights and will not support cultural practices/traditions inconsistent with fundamental human rights.

### **Consequently, Oxfam Australia calls for:**

- The Australian government to demonstrate a commitment to Indigenous Australians by addressing criticisms from UN committees on Australian legislation detrimental to Indigenous Peoples
- The Australian government, at Commonwealth and State levels, to be responsive to Indigenous voices, respect self-determination and Indigenous-led solutions, and act in accordance with those solutions. The now disbanded ATSIC must be replaced with truly representative mechanisms which allow a variety of Indigenous voices to be heard
- Government policy and practice must recognise the rights of Indigenous Australians to access urgently needed health and education programs
- Constitutional recognition and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. In Australia, this may include a treaty or a Bill of Rights which is inclusive of Indigenous Peoples, makes Aboriginal Australians part of its framing, and recognises them as the first people of Australia
- Further work taking up the issue of reconciliation and implementation of the recommendations in the final report of the now disbanded Council on Aboriginal Reconciliation. It is important that the Australian government address the issue of reconciliation in the Australian community
- Non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities to commit to genuine reconciliation that builds a solid foundation for living together peacefully and

## Policy Of The Board

equitably

### **Appropriate community-based strategies:**

Oxfam Australia should focus on Indigenous issues in Australia as well as other regions, ensuring that our experience is shared across the range of Indigenous communities with which we work.

Strategic priorities for Oxfam Australia are those of Indigenous youth, as the majority of Indigenous Australians are under the age of 25 and youth are important for maintaining our Indigenous heritage and keeping it alive. In addition, we should assist Indigenous organisations to address issues of health, governance and economic opportunity for Indigenous communities, assisting organisations to find a voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concerns.

*In recognition of the changing contemporary debate around the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Australia, the Board will review this policy in June 2009.*

# Policy Of The Board



**Type: Position policy**

**Title: Globalisation**

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Policy Serial No. : POS 2.3  
Date of Adoption: Nov 2001  
Amended: May 2010

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## **The Context:**

Oxfam Australia observes that:

Globalisation refers to the increasing interconnectedness of humanity and the many ways in which space and time have been compressed by technology, information flows, trade and power so that distant actions have local effects. Likewise, local action can now reach around the world in ways that hitherto were not possible, and this can have global effects.

Current patterns of globalisation are creating opportunities for those with the assets, skills and the education needed to operate in increasingly competitive markets, and millions have been brought out of poverty in many parts of the world. Those without assets and skills - the landless, the urban poor, illiterate - are being left behind, and many indigenous communities and others are missing out all together. Globalisation while creating opportunities for some is also exacerbating existing inequalities. Globalisation can also be a threat to cultural diversity, traditional community structures, and traditional knowledge on which many of the world's people depend, as governments both locally, and as bilateral donors reduce investment in these areas.

Globalisation has led to an increase in private sector investment in developing countries to the extent it now dwarfs the flow of official aid. Private investment is an important driver for economic growth and poverty reduction. Yet, poorly regulated private sector investment can also undermine people's rights and destroy the environment. The private sector should be appropriately regulated so it is accountable to governments and local communities for the social and environmental consequences of its actions.

Technology, particularly communications, whether through lower transport costs within and between countries, or the rapid growth in telecommunications technology, has also provided great opportunities for change and improvement in millions of people lives. For example, a positive effect of the globalised media services has been to accelerate the world responses to disaster and crises such as the Asian Tsunami of 2004. On the other hand this technological change can exacerbate power relations between north and south, strengthen fundamentalist movements of all types, and lead to different forms of conditionality in north-south relations.

There are, however, emerging opportunities. There has been also the rise in new global groupings, moving away from the 'Northern' dominated G8, to the G20 and other groupings, which have a much stronger developing country membership and a greater voice in global affairs. There has also been the rise of a new and powerful transnational civil society with a mass broad constituency – particularly young people - for eliminating poverty and ensuring social justice. An example is the Make Poverty History campaign, which has been very successful in raising awareness of aid and development issues around the world. Oxfam International is part of this.

Oxfam Australia has identified three major issues that have emerged in the early 2000s that are having a profound effect on poor people:

## Policy Of The Board

- Greater food insecurity is emerging as climate and water related stresses are affecting output. The demand for food grains and arable land for bio-fuels, and grain fed livestock for a growing demand for meat in developing countries has led to higher food prices for the poor in developing countries, commodity and land speculation, all contributing to growing food insecurity.
- An increase in internal and international migration particularly short-term 'circular' migration in developing countries, as poor people seek to diversify their livelihoods, expand their opportunities, as well as provide income for their home communities. There is also an increase in women migrating for short term work. While migration presents opportunities, it can also lead to the erosion of workers' rights, increased vulnerability of women and children to abusive practices; and lead to increased family pressure as families are often separated for long period of time. These jobs are also the most insecure and vulnerable to economic shocks.
- Vulnerability, more broadly, is increasing as poor people are drawn into an increasingly uncertain and interlinked global system. While this often presents opportunities, the poor are often the first to feel the effects of global shocks, whether they be economic or natural, as a result of rapid climate change.

### **Oxfam Australia Principles:**

Our view is:

Globalisation is multi-faceted and involves more than economics. The globalisation of information flows and communication offers significant new opportunities to empower people. Health and education services are in many places more widely available, with extreme poverty and life expectancy statistics improving. However, some globalisation's economic effects have moved ahead of the capacity and will of governments, international institutions and civil society, to protect the interests of the economically vulnerable.

Economic globalisation can only help to end poverty if equity is given the same priority as economic growth. A humane global balance sheet must be based on the principle that economics and markets should benefit society. The Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2010 has highlighted the urgent need for reform and greater regulation of the global economic system, so that negative social and environmental impacts can be avoided.

The key principles that should govern Oxfam's approach are that human rights should be the basis for any analysis and engagement with issues of globalisation; that local governance and voice is an important principle if the effects of globalisation on vulnerable communities is to be managed; that there is transparency to and involvement of local communities in decisions that affect their lives; and finally, the recognition that there are common but differentiated responsibilities to the poor and marginalised by all involved in globalisation, whether they be governments, private sector, multilateral agencies or civil society and local communities.

### **Consequently, Oxfam Australia calls for:**

- A focus on equity and vulnerability- by focusing on equity and vulnerability Oxfam Australia is putting the interests of the vulnerable including women, children, marginalised communities (including indigenous groups), as central in its program and advocacy work. In particular that securing gender equity should be a leading

## Policy Of The Board

priority for activism on globalisation (see Oxfam Australia Gender Justice policy). Food security is and will continue to be a priority for government and NGOs alike, and should be a focus of global institutions.

- Migration in all its forms but particularly refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, and short term migration of poor people especially women and girls, should be a focus of positive policies to ensure that they receive recognition and their rights are respected. As a first step all states should ratify both the Migration and Refugee Conventions.
- Stronger global governance to ensure that global financial organisations as well as multi-lateral organisations, private and state corporations, and other major players in the process of globalisation are transparent and accountable, and that their practices are ecologically sustainable and socially responsible.
- Citizens of North and South need to work together for economic and social justice, and recognise that civil society organisations that represent the poor and marginalised are the drivers of these processes.

### **Appropriate Community-based Strategies:**

Oxfam Australia's strategy is to promote dialogue between governments, civil society, and the private sector on issues around globalisation. The Oxfam Australia community, be it the supporters in Australia or partner communities in developing countries, will be actively involved through lobbying, campaigning and awareness raising in creating more just and equitable forms of globalisation.

The focus should be on Oxfam's own program and advocacy work to include migration more broadly, and maintain reducing vulnerability and food insecurity as core planks of its work. Advocacy with global institutions and governments on globalisation should focus on global regulation and rules that reduce vulnerability and ensure the rights of the poor and marginalised are recognised and respected.

# Policy Of The Board



**Title: Trade and Development Policy**

**Type: Position policy**

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Policy Serial No. : POS 2.3.1  
Date of Adoption: Nov 2001  
Amended: Oct 2008

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## **The problem:**

Trade has the potential to lift millions out of poverty and promote economic and social development. That potential is not being realized because the rules and practices of international trade are biased towards awarding a disproportionate share of the benefits to rich countries and powerful corporations, which in turn are reinforced by institutional systems.

## **Oxfam Australia's principles:**

While recognizing that trade is important in generating prosperity, Oxfam Australia believes that what is required is fairer trade rules, not simply trade liberalization. Wide-ranging changes are needed to ensure that the world trade regime promotes poverty reduction, respect for human rights, and environmental sustainability. These changes will involve radical reform of trade policies, agreements, and institutions at national, regional, and international levels. They will also require a fundamental change of approach by governments so that trade is no longer seen as an end in itself, but rather is managed and evaluated on the basis of its contribution to economic and social development and environmental sustainability. These principles are covered in depth in the Rugged Rules & Double Standards report by Oxfam.

Oxfam Australia calls on the Australian Government to:

Support the right of developing countries to protect the conditions of their imports trade. Developing countries should not be pressured into signing trade agreements that set back the pursuit of economic and social development. The World Trade Organization<sup>i</sup> (WTO) needs to support the right of developing countries to:

- Decide the pace and extent to which they liberalize their import trade.
- Protect particularly important sectors of their economies, including manufacturing or service sectors and essential public services.
- Resist liberalizing their agricultural import trade prematurely when that is likely to lead to an influx of imports that would undermine local livelihoods
- Be allowed extended and more lenient 'Special and Differential Treatment' on tariff reductions in WTO agreements
- Enact legislation and regulations to protect labour and environmental standards.

## **Support the ability of developing countries to increase market access into rich countries and protect the conditions of their export trade**

Export trade can create new opportunities for employment and investment. However extreme forms of exploitation have often accompanied export growth. Reform is needed for the right of developing countries to:

## Policy Of The Board

- Protect their agricultural systems for food-security purposes
- Protect exploitation of cheap labour, especially among female workers
- Engage in higher-value-added trade so that export growth can contribute to rapid increases in living standards.

The Fair Trade system is one example of trade that upholds these rights, where commodities and goods are produced and traded under monitored conditions that are fair and sustainable. Oxfam Australia believes that Fair Trade can influence conventional trade and systems by demonstrating the extent of public concern and consumer demand. It provides an economically viable model of trade that is more equitable in the distribution of negotiating power and the costs and benefits of trade.

### **Provide adequate 'Aid for Trade'.**

No amount of aid can compensate for fundamentally unfair and harmful trade rules. Developing countries need assistance to actively participate in the international trading system and to effectively pursue their national development agendas.

- Recipient countries should drive the process of establishing priorities for the use of 'aid for trade' funds rather than responding to donor priorities.
- Budgets should be additional to existing development aid. It needs to support investments in productive assets, such as land, credit, health care, education, and infrastructure provision, rather than displacing or diverting current aid commitments from humanitarian and development priorities
- Agreements should be predictable, and free of economic conditions. It should not be used as an instrument to coerce developing countries to liberalize or to accept a trade agreement that does not promote their development interests
- 'Aid for Trade' should be complementary to, and not a substitute for, better and fairer trade rules.

Not impose unfair trade rules, rejected by developing countries at the WTO, in bilateral and regional agreements.

**Rich countries should not negotiate bilateral or regional trade agreements that are unequal, unfair or take advantage of the weaker negotiating position of developing countries, or undermine the multilateral rules based system. Reform is needed to avoid the imbalance caused by:**

- Enforcing extensive liberalisation measures, corporate intellectual property claims or investor protection that are often detrimental to development
- Limiting the policy space needed for the developing countries to move up the development ladder
- Establishing unequal structures in domestic economies, allowing the benefits of trade to accrue primarily to those who already have accumulated assets, while exacerbating gaps between rich and poor.
- Undermining the multilateral rules-based system, such as the limited developmental gains made at the WTO, where developing countries have together been more successfully able to reject bad agreements and stand firm on their development needs.

**Oxfam Australia calls on world governments, trade bodies and TNCs<sup>ii</sup> to act on the issues already raised in this Position Policy as well as the following areas:**

### **Adopt social and environmentally responsible business practices:**

- Northern governments should establish (under the OECD<sup>iii</sup> Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises) better mechanisms for investigation, monitoring and reporting, in order to hold TNCs accountable for their actions in developing countries.
- Governments should establish a legally binding international protocol, based on the UN Fundamental Human Rights Principles for Business Enterprises, to govern the production, trade, and consumption of natural resources from conflict areas.
- Governments should develop a Global Anti-Trust Mechanism to extend the principles of antimonopoly legislation beyond national borders to the international economy.

### **Support fair Labour rights**

- The WTO's Trade Policy Reviews should report on trade-related labour standards.
- The ILO's<sup>iv</sup> capacity to monitor and enforce core labour standards should be strengthened.
- Stakeholders should enact and enforce national employment laws consistent with the core standards of the ILO.

### **Avoid unfair foreign investment practices**

Foreign investment has many potential benefits. It can provide access to new financial resources, technologies, and markets. However, developing countries are often subject to unfair financial investment conditions from a number of bodies, such as:

- Agreements that contain loan conditions, which encourage unsustainable debt for developing countries.
- Foreign direct investment<sup>v</sup> (FDI) from TNCs that can include high levels of profit repatriation, high-cost incentives to attract investors, and tax avoidance combine to reduce real financial transfers to the country where investments are located.
- Liberalisation measures by rich countries under IMF and World Bank conditions that are not balanced by equivalent reductions in their own import barriers.
- PRSPs<sup>vi</sup> that do not include a detailed analysis of the potential impact of trade liberalization on income distribution and poverty reduction.

### **Support more appropriate measures to protect intellectual-property and variety of food and agriculture resources in developing countries.**

We call for trade agreements that:

- End the universal application of the WTO intellectual-property blueprint, and allow developing countries to retain the right to maintain shorter and more flexible systems of intellectual-property protection
- Commit to put public-health priorities before the claims of patent holders
- Support stronger rights for developing countries to develop more appropriate forms of plant variety protection, and to protect farmers' rights to save, sell, and exchange seeds.

**Oxfam Australia calls on our supporters to:**



## Policy Of The Board

- Make informed consumer choices to support trade that is fair, not exploitative or environmentally damaging and contributes to social and economic development of producer and local communities.
- Call on governments, global bodies and businesses to engage in fairer trading practices

### Summary

Economic integration in the global economy can be a source of shared prosperity and poverty reduction, or a source of increasing inequality and exclusion. Managed well, the international trading system can lift millions out of poverty. Managed badly, it will leave whole economies and peoples even more marginalized.

Continuing on the current path is not an option. But a retreat into isolationism would deprive the poor of the opportunities offered by trade. It would counteract a powerful force for poverty reduction. That is why Oxfam Australia supports a new global trade order, grounded in new approaches to rights and responsibilities, and in a commitment to make globalisation work for the poor.

## 2. Community Engagement and Consultation

### 2.1 State Based Activities

Following the face to face meeting with State Chairs on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2008 a small group of CRC and State Chairs formed to discuss operationalising the Strategic Plan at a local level, Group Development and Maintenance and the discussion about the role of State Committees. The CRC will report orally to the Board on the progress of this discussion.

<sup>1</sup> WTO - World Trade Organization

<sup>1</sup> TNCs - Trans National Corporations

<sup>1</sup> OECD – Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development

<sup>1</sup> ILO - International Labour Organisation

<sup>1</sup> FDI - Foreign Direct Investment

<sup>1</sup> PRSP - Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

# Policy Of The Board



**Title: Climate Change, Development and Social Justice**

**Type: Position  
policy**

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Policy Serial No. : POS 2.3.2  
Date of Adoption: Nov 2001  
Amended: Dec 2007, May 2011

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## Introduction

Climate change is a development issue that seriously threatens the lives and livelihoods of poor people around the world. As it impacts hardest on people living in poverty, it deepens inequalities and threatens many efforts for development. Action is needed now, through co-operation at local, regional and global levels, to limit the extents of climate change, strengthen communities' resilience to change and disasters, and support just and sustainable paths for development.

## Background

Climate change affects all sectors of development including food and water security, health and sanitation, displacement and migration, and conflict and disasters. Changes in the seasons and heightened extremes of temperature and rainfall have myriad effects on health and agricultural livelihoods, while sea level rise and ocean acidification aggravate the impact on coastal communities, major river deltas and the islands of the Pacific<sup>vii</sup>. Developing countries are more vulnerable to climate change because they are more dependent on their natural resources and ecosystems than developed countries, and have a lower capacity to cope with environmental degradation and disasters<sup>viii</sup>. The poor and marginalised of the world, particularly women, living in developing countries are most vulnerable to the effect of climate change.

Current scientific understanding of the climate system indicates that global temperature rise must be limited to as far below 1.5°C as possible (relative to pre-industrial times) and greenhouse gases stabilised at less than 350 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> (or 400 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalents) in order to avoid more extreme impacts and minimise risks of passing tipping points<sup>ix</sup>. Global emissions of greenhouse gases must therefore be cut by at least 42% below 1990 levels by 2020 and reach net-zero by 2050<sup>x</sup>.

The United Nations is the primary international forum in which all countries, rich and poor, should agree ambitious targets and funding to address climate change. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)<sup>xi</sup> provides the key means for international responses to climate change. Discussions in other fora (such as the G8, G20 and APEC) should contribute towards negotiations and final decision-making within the United Nations process. Nevertheless, action is required at a local and regional level, along with the global level, to address climate change.

Meanwhile, citizens, community groups and local/state governments are leading the way in addressing climate change with processes that bring together microcosms of populations to deliberate deeply and make thoughtful recommendations to governments, along with action plans for their own communities. National governments would do well to support as well as emulate these processes, and ensure the voices of the poor and marginalised in developing countries are heard<sup>xii</sup>.

# Policy Of The Board



## Oxfam Position

Oxfam Australia's work on climate change is guided by it being a rights-based development organisation with a commitment to global and just solutions. The specific principles driving Oxfam Australia's position are:

- 1. Social Justice**, in acknowledging the deep injustice in the impacts of climate change, across today's world, across generations and between genders. While richer countries are largely responsible for the problem, people in poorer countries are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and often have the least resources to respond. Decisions made in the next decade will shape the consequences for many future generations. Women are more vulnerable to climate change as they depend more on the natural environment for their livelihoods, and are often at greater risk in conflicts and disasters.
- 2. The precautionary principle** whereby risks of action and inaction are carefully weighed and uncertainties are treated as risk parameters rather than as excuses for inaction, and noting it is the poor, and poor women, who carry the greater burden of risk.
- 3. Mitigation**, being a reduction in the rate and magnitude of changes to our climate. Immediate global action and co-operation is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from human activities such as fossil fuel use and land use change. Rich countries that are largely responsible for human-induced climate change must lead in acting to reduce their emissions in order to avoid dangerous climate change.
- 4. Adaptation**, which to be successful requires community-centred responses to increase resilience, involving those who are most at risk from climate change impacts<sup>xiii</sup>. This includes planning for climate uncertainty, protecting ecosystems and infrastructure, adopting appropriate technologies and diversification of livelihoods. Additional capacity is critical for communities to cope with the many impacts of climate change and for some highly vulnerable communities, particularly on low lying islands and deltaic regions, successful adaptation will require an international response.
- 5. Assistance**, rich countries must assist poor nations in taking a low carbon path to development that is secure, affordable, accessible and sustainable. This should not displace existing aid activities aimed at alleviating poverty and achieving the MDGs but be in addition to these efforts.
- 6. International frameworks** for responding to climate change must be based on equitable sharing of costs and effort, that is, common but differentiated responsibilities, which are essential for the frameworks acceptance and realisation.

## Conclusion

Applying a rights-based approach, Oxfam Australia calls for immediate action and cooperation at global, regional and local levels, in order to keep global temperature rise as far below 1.5° Celsius as possible (above pre-industrial levels) in order to minimise the impacts of climate change on the lives and livelihoods of poor people around the world. As part of this developing countries and their poor must be supported in their moving to a low carbon economy.

## **PART 2: Consequential Actions**

To implement its position on climate change, Oxfam Australia will advocate for, and where possible undertake itself, the following consequential actions – categorised according to the institution responsible.

### ***All National Governments:***

- Acknowledge that rich countries are largely responsible for causing climate change and have the responsibility and capability to lead in reducing emissions and supporting adaptation and low-carbon development.
- Recognise the United Nations as the international forum in which all countries, rich and poor, should agree ambitious targets and funding to address climate change.
- Recognise the need for urgent and unprecedented global cooperation to make the changes necessary to address climate change and work together to keep global temperature rise as far below 1.5°C as possible and commit to the necessary binding targets to reduce emissions in order to minimise the impacts of climate change.
- Ensure that greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for developing countries take account of current and past per capita emissions as a proportion of all global greenhouse emissions, and the capacity to pay for reductions whilst also reducing poverty. As part of this establish a global system for climate financing that is fair, transparent and accessible, and sufficient to enable developing countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change with the majority of funds coordinated through a Global Climate Fund under the UNFCCC<sup>xiv</sup>.
- Explore market-based mechanisms for emissions reductions, especially by placing a price on carbon (via a carbon tax or emissions trading or hybrid system), ensuring that such mechanisms will contribute genuine reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and are consistent with principles of equitable and sustainable development.
- Employ a set of complementary instruments to drive domestic emissions reductions, such as taxes, subsidies, direct investments and regulatory standards, recognising that market-based mechanisms alone will not be sufficient.
- Focus efforts to meet the energy needs of developed and developing countries on the development of clean, renewable energy sources, and efficient mechanisms for technology transfer. Technologies that are energy intensive and use finite resources or pose great environmental risks, such as nuclear energy or large scale hydro-electricity, should not be pursued.
- Design and implement mechanisms for REDD+ (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) in developing countries, and also actions on forest management and carbon stocks, to generate real and additional reductions in emission, avoid marginalisation of forest-dependent communities; and ensure the equitable distribution of efforts and potential benefits.
- Develop equitable international standards for: agro-fuels production (accounting for effects on food availability, access to food and stability of food supply) and carbon offsets (to ensure they are not counted twice

## Policy Of The Board

towards emissions reduction targets in the developed country of origin and the developing country, achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, are maintained long term, accountably managed, developed with the consent of affected communities and reduce poverty).

- Renew support for conflict resolution processes through the UN and regional bodies so that there is greater capacity for peaceful resolution of natural resource–based conflicts, for example over water sources or allocations.
- Develop systems for co-operation to address the rights of persons displaced by chronic or sudden environmental changes or conflicts arising from anthropogenic climate change, and identify how responsibilities will be shared equitably among nations.
- Amend WTO rules to accept pricing or trade regulations that recognise the full social and environmental costs of products and commodities, ensuring that this is based on full life-cycle analysis, and to prevent exclusion of marginalised groups from international trade.
- Recognise that there are common but differentiated responsibilities across nations, as this is essential for their international acceptance and realisation.

### ***The Australian Government:***

- Recognise that this is a crisis we helped to generate, and that we can help to change.
- Fully participate in international efforts to avoid dangerous climate change through mandatory means, and ensure compliance with UNFCCC Protocols.
- Commit to an international framework for stabilisation of greenhouse gas levels at <350 ppm and limiting warming to less than 1.5 degrees C. and adopt a national framework for urgently reducing Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions by at least 90% of 1990 levels by 2050, and by at least 40% by 2020, by socially equitable means.
- Commit to fair and adequate adaptation financing, in addition to development aid, based on a ‘polluter pays’ principle, that is accounted for based on responsibility and capability. As part of this integrate climate change into all parts of the aid program through a climate change plan. This includes disaster risk reduction, mitigation and adaptation.
- Review its immigration program in light of the expected impacts of climate change to consider supporting people displaced by climate change.
- Review the impact of climate change on indigenous communities in Australia.
- Prioritise renewable energy and energy efficiency over fossil fuel generation, nuclear, hydropower, ‘clean coal’ and carbon storage (geo-sequestration). Focus on current technology rather than delay action while waiting to develop new technologies, and support significant private investment in renewable energy.
- Commit to the reduction of all environmentally damaging land clearing activities, and to the sustainable management of natural ecosystems, for climate mitigation and sustained ecosystem services.

### ***The Business and the Community:***

- Reduce private sector emissions through energy efficiency and demand reductions, and regularly report on their progress to stakeholders and the public.
- Revise private sector policies to ensure the policies take into consideration the emissions from supply chains and practices, and how these impact on communities vulnerable to the effects of climate change.
- Advocate for tackling climate change with their elected officials and consumer activities.
- Ensure that their own operations minimise any negative impacts on the environment, as well as foster positive impacts.
- Actively support Oxfam's climate change and development policy.

### ***Oxfam Australia:***

- Publicly and transparently promote its plans and work to significantly and sustainably reduce its carbon footprint by 2015, of all its operations in Australia.
- Contribute to the education and mobilisation of our supporters and the wider Australian community to reduce their carbon footprints in order to contribute to equitable global development.
- Provide support to poor communities to reduce their vulnerability to climate change through work on sustainable development, disaster preparedness, and appropriate adaptation.
- Provide research and evidence-based reporting on the impacts of climate change in developing countries and vulnerable communities in order to influence decision-makers. This will be done by undertaking research in developing countries to learn more about climate change impacts and adaptation to inform our ongoing long term, humanitarian and advocacy work.
- Undertake further policy development on (1) bio-fuels and their potential impact on emission reduction, food security, deforestation, etc, and (2) the role of larger developing countries such as the BRICSAM countries in climate mitigation.
- Work in national and international coalitions and alliances to advocate real change in national governments around greenhouse gas emissions reductions and adaptation financing that is adequate, equitable and fair.

# Policy Of The Board



**Type: Position policy**

**Title: Australia's Response to all people seeking refuge**

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Policy Serial No. : POS 2.3.3  
Date of adoption: March 2002  
Amended: October 2008

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## **The Problem:**

The past century has witnessed increasing numbers of refugees fleeing persecution in their homelands, many of whom are women and their dependent children. There is a range of causes for rising refugee numbers, including increasing civil, ethnic and religious conflict, tensions generated by inequality within and between countries, and the failure of governments to protect vulnerable groups. In our region, with the emergence of climate change related disasters, we are likely to see an increase in numbers of people seeking refuge in Australia and the region from the effects of climate change. Whilst not recognized under international refugee law, these people clearly demonstrate humanitarian protection and assistance needs.

Refugees and asylum seekers, including those fleeing, are increasingly left with limited alternatives to escape ongoing persecution. Their health, security and human rights are placed at further risk by having to shelter in under-resourced camps (frequently in poor countries that have little capacity for adequate protection) or take hazardous measures to travel to a safe destination.

Australia is a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which build on the fundamental right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution (Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and set out internationally recognised obligations of states towards refugees.

Pre-2007 Australia had attracted domestic and international criticism for its punitive and deterrence oriented approach to people seeking refuge. This included policies such as mandatory, indefinite and non-reviewable detention of asylum seekers in harsh and isolated conditions, the off-shore processing of asylum seekers and the denial of a source of income and healthcare to some asylum seekers in the community. In addition, the Australian Government had failed to actively pursue preventative solutions through allocating aid to countries where refugees originate, or to economically developing countries which house (warehouse) the majority of the international refugee caseload.

However, further changes have occurred since the election of the Australian Labor Party in November 2007. Most recently, a change to detention was announced, taking a risk-based approach so that after initial health, identity and security checks, people should only be detained if they pose a security or compliance risk. It was also announced that children would never be detained in a detention centre. The Pacific Solution has ended, a policy framework allowing complementary protection is being developed and the new government is adopting an approach to refugee/asylum seeker policy formation which is inclusive of civil society views and recommendations.

## **Oxfam Australia's Principles:**

## Policy Of The Board

Australia should provide refuge to any person fleeing war, famine, conflict, climate change related disaster, human rights abuse or other circumstance which led to their displacement and humanitarian need.

Australia's specific policies on people seeking refuge should operate within the spirit of its international commitment to refugees, asylum seekers and others seeking refuge and their human rights.

Australia has an ethical and humanitarian imperative, as a wealthy nation which is a leading polluter per capita and the world's highest exporter of coal, to spearhead regional responses to address the root causes of climate change; to address the humanitarian effects of climate change; and, to meet the financial burden of these responses.

Australia should take an active part with the international community in focusing on tackling the root causes of people's dislocation and need for asylum.

Australia should strive for best practice in the reception, processing and care of refugees. In accordance with UNHCR's policy and 1999 Guidelines, detention should be used only as a last resort, and only for preliminary health, security and identity screening.

Particular attention should be paid to protecting the rights of all children involved, in accordance with Australia's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, acknowledging the importance of the child's best interests and family unity.

Public debate on the rights, cultures and predicaments of refugees should be conducted fairly and democratically, in accordance with principles of respect, balance and accuracy.

### **Consequently, Oxfam Australia calls for:**

The Australian Government to

1. Establish reception processes that meet the humanitarian needs of people fleeing without distinction based on the reason for their displacement (i.e. people will be granted protection and assistance based on the bona fides of their humanitarian need – this will include refugees, people fleeing climate related disasters, human rights abuses, famine or other pressure)
2. Develop constructive, long-term strategies to help build peace in conflict zones, and support neighbouring countries to care for people seeking refuge without resorting to short-term plans that distort aid allocations;
3. Australia should develop effective policies and processes to protect and assist people displaced through climate related disasters.
4. Encourage governments, UN bodies, international institutions and other stakeholders to work together for positive outcomes on providing refuge for people based on humanitarian need, including those seeking refuge from climate change related disasters;



## Policy Of The Board

5. Incorporate further human rights instruments protecting asylum seekers into domestic law, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture, and encourage other national governments in our region to do so;
6. Continue to develop best practice alternatives to long-term mandatory detention for dealing with people, particularly children, who arrive in Australia;
7. Ensure that, for as long as detention remains a policy option, that internationally recognised standards relating to humane conditions of detention and detainee rights are observed and those standards are incorporated into domestic law;
8. Process refugee claims expeditiously and fairly;
9. Ensure accessible, comprehensive and efficient legal processes for appealing Government decisions relating to refugee status are available;
10. Ensure work rights and medical coverage is available for all people seeking asylum in Australia who are present in the community;
11. Provide adequate settlement services to those who are provided refuge, in particular adequate funding for English language training, employment assistance and trauma counseling;
12. Ensure that public deliberation on refugee issues is conducted fairly and constructively by disseminating timely and accurate information to the Australian public, facilitating access by media and monitoring bodies to detention facilities, educating the broader Australian community about the benefits to Australia of accepting refugees, and enabling greater participation of civil society organisations and the Australian people in shaping national refugee policies.
13. Establish an immigration program with a quota for people fleeing climate related disasters which is additional to our current humanitarian quota;
14. Advocate for a new legal instrument and funding mechanism under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change specifically for the protection, compensation and resettlement of people fleeing climate related disasters.

# Policy Of The Board



**Title: Engagement with the Private Sector**

**Type: Position Policy**

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Policy Serial No: POS 2.3.4

Date of Adoption: Feb 2006

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## **The Issue:**

Oxfam Australia observes that:

Ethical, productive and environmentally sustainable private sector investment can be an important force for poverty reduction and human development around the world. Conversely, private sector investment can sometimes undermine the fundamental rights of poor and vulnerable people. Oxfam works with many people affected in this way.

Given our mission to eliminate poverty and injustice, our engagement with the private sector is a key activity. Oxfam Australia seeks to do so in a positive spirit of open collaboration, to assist business to work in ways which enable people to realise their rights. Equally Oxfam Australia will challenge actions that threaten the rights and well-being of poor and vulnerable people and communities, and will campaign to influence private sector policies and practices to ensure these do not undermine the rights of poor and marginalised people.

Parts of the private sector actively support the work of Oxfam Australia through financial or in-kind support. More broadly, the private sector represents a significant source of funds to assist Oxfam Australia in our work, in overcoming poverty and social injustice. We welcome and value such support and will work closely with appropriate companies in the private sector to optimise the support Oxfam Australia receives.

Oxfam Australia's goals in engaging with the private sector are to:

- Influence the understanding, policies and practices of the private sector bring about concrete, long-term and sustainable gains for people living in poverty and affected by injustice.
- Promote the development of standards and regulations that improve the social and environmental performance of the private sector. These may be multilateral or national regulations, as well as codes of conduct – where these do not undermine more formal regulation.
- Secure financial and other support from the private sector to increase our ability to provide lasting support to those communities with whom we work.
- Improve opportunities for us or our partners to access the private sector, governments or key alliances and undertake positive engagements.
- Improve our understanding of the private sector through our experience or research.

This policy is consistent with Oxfam International policies and principles on private sector interaction, and sets out principles as they apply to Oxfam Australia.

## **Oxfam Australia Principles:**

Our view is:

- The private sector can generate resources, employment and access to markets which can assist people to attain sustainable livelihoods.
- Governments, civil society, the private sector and international institutions share a responsibility for ensuring that social and economic development is based on pro-poor policy decisions and is not left solely to the competing forces of the marketplace.
- A framework of Corporate Social Responsibility is an essential part of good business. Private sector operations should adhere to internationally accepted social, environmental and labour standards and should not exploit or disadvantage affected communities.

Oxfam Australia takes a multi-faceted approach to interaction with the private sector, depending on the business sector, the company, and the issue. Approaches include cooperative work on the design, implementation and monitoring of improved corporate conduct and standards, marketing relationships, financial or non-financial support, private lobbying and where necessary to bring about change, public criticism.

Oxfam Australia will base its engagements with the private sector on the following principles:

- **Impact** – Our engagement will contribute to achieving positive and sustainable change in people’s lives – both for the communities we seek to assist and other stakeholders.
- **Involvement of stakeholders** - Appropriate involvement of partners and other stakeholders will be considered in the negotiation, design and implementation of engagement with the private sector.
- **Ethics** – We will act ethically and in accordance with our Vision and Ends policies. We will also expect partners in the engagement to adhere to agreed principles in actions associated with the engagement.
- **Integrity** – Our capacity to speak out with authority and fairness on issues of poverty, distress, suffering and injustice will not be compromised by acceptance of funds or other relationships with companies.
- **Due diligence** – We will apply due diligence in managing the risks related to interactions with companies. Risks include those associated with acceptance or refusal of funds, sponsorship or in kind support, as well as risks arising from critical advocacy and the supply of goods and services. We will consider the risk that our engagement with a company might enhance that company's public image in a manner which undermines attempts by other organisations to persuade that company (or industry) to reduce the harm it is causing to poor people and their environments.
- **Consistency** - We will be consistent across the organisation and hence will aim to meet the same social, labour and environmental standards as we demand of corporations.
- **Transparency** – We will maintain transparency and clarity with relevant partners, affected communities, NGOs, trade unions and our supporters about our private sector engagement. In specific circumstances, we may judge that closed-door, candid discussions with a company are necessary to achieve ultimately favourable outcomes for all parties. This approach will be used in

## Policy Of The Board

clearly defined and exceptional cases only. In circumstances where sharing information will endanger the livelihood, safety or well-being of particular individuals or organisations, we will not share that information without the permission of those organisations or individuals.

- Objective measures – We will consider and continually evaluate all engagements on their merits, to ensure consistency with our vision, Ends policies and this position policy.

### **Consequently, Oxfam Australia calls for:**

- Commitment by the private sector to upholding international laws and standards such as the United Nations Norms for Transnational Corporations, UNEP Finance Initiative and International Labour Organisation conventions, recognising the effects of corporate conduct on the lives of people, communities and their environments.
- Further evaluation of private sector activities against standards for Corporate Social Responsibility. Examples include the initiatives of the Fairwear Foundation (Netherlands) and Workers Rights Consortium (US).
- Extraterritorial regulation of Australian private sector companies with significant offshore operations in developing countries requiring such companies' operations to meet internationally accepted human rights, labour, social and environmental norms.
- Commitment by governments to regulate the activities of the private sector, to ensure equity and concentration on positive, sustainable outcomes for the most disadvantaged groups in the society.
- Policy development and initiatives by governments in the more developed economies, to recognise and account for the effects of the private sector across the globe, whether those effects be economic, social or environmental.
- Recognition that professionals in many spheres, from engineering and the sciences to finance and agriculture, need to understand the social and ethical issues involved in trans-national trade. As one way to develop this, we call for the inclusion of educational courses on Corporate Social Responsibility and community development in Australian tertiary institutions.

## Policy Of The Board

**Title: Armed Conflict and Development**

**Type: Position policy**

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Policy Serial No. : POS 2.4  
Date of Adoption: May 2003

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### **The problem:**

Widespread armed conflict and its aftermath are too often a result of, and responsible for, the poverty, injustice and marginalisation that development agencies seek to alleviate. Conflict has the potential to sweep away decades of developmental gains through loss of life, livelihoods, property and food security; internal displacement and refugee flows; environmental degradation; increased vulnerability to disease; and the destruction of economic, social and political structures. By contrast, a peaceful and stable political environment can provide a solid foundation for sustainable development.

With the majority of contemporary armed conflicts occurring in least developed countries, the world's poor are the most vulnerable to the ravages of conflict. Increasingly, civilians rather than combatants are the primary victims of war. Women, children and ethnic minorities are among the worst affected groups, whether through systematic rape, recruitment as child soldiers, or genocide and ethnic cleansing. Many of today's conflicts are internal, raising complex dilemmas for external bodies seeking to assist efforts at resolution. Terrorism associated with armed conflict likewise affects non-combatants; it also poses increased challenges for global security.

While ethnic conflict and social tensions are often simplistically characterised as the causes, the complex reality includes economic and political dimensions too, with the roots of instability including debt, colonial legacies, the aftermath of the Cold War, competition for resources, religious intolerance, erosion of social capital, and repression of civil society.

The economic and political interests of developed countries are often directly implicated in generating and perpetuating conflict in poorer regions. Exports of primary resources such as minerals and oil from developing countries, and funding by expatriates in wealthier countries, often play a major role in financing armed violence. Meanwhile, the international arms trade is still prospering in the absence of effective regulation. National governments are generally reluctant to finance conflict prevention or become involved in conflicts that do not affect them directly, while international resources for post-conflict reconstruction tend to be paltry except in strategically important or geographically proximate regions. Non-government organisations play a vital role as independent sources of humanitarian relief, but frequently run the risk of being co-opted by competing interests in a conflict or being disproportionately left responsible for the fate of citizens in an affected region. The global media, while often at the forefront in bringing the brutal realities of conflict to the world's awareness, may also heighten tensions and entrench prejudices.

### ***Oxfam Australia's Principles:***

- Since our beginnings as Food for Peace in 1953, we have emphasised the need for peace and development to reinforce one another. Throughout our work around the world, we seek to uphold the right of everyone to life and security (see Oxfam International's rights-based aim 3, and Oxfam Australia Ends Policy 2.5): freedom

from violence, conflict and fear are pre-requisites for economic and social justice and sustainable development.

- Peace-building requires participatory and constructive approaches at all levels of society, from the international to the local. We believe that international dialogue and engagement, and the establishment of a just, transparent and responsive global order, are vital for ensuring international peace and security.
- The origins and impacts of conflicts are highly complex and variable. Consequently, careful analysis of the specific circumstances of each conflict situation is vital for effective humanitarian response, while acknowledging the need for urgent action in rapidly changing contexts.
- While some instances of aggression and gross violations of human rights may render outside intervention unavoidable in order to protect life and security, we emphasise that all peaceful means of resolution including Peace Keeping should take priority; the use of armed force should be a last resort; and any military response must be consistent with international law.
- We are committed to the principles of international humanitarian law (including the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols), human rights and refugee law; the Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response;<sup>1</sup> the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes;<sup>2</sup> the guiding principles of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA);<sup>3</sup> and the Contract for Oxfam International Humanitarian Action.
- A commitment by nations to collective security through the United Nations.

***Consequently, Oxfam Australia calls for:***

- Governments and international decision-makers to give greater priority to conflict prevention and resolution, non-violent reconciliation of opposed interests and post-conflict reconstruction, both through local peace-building initiatives and on a national and international level;
- Governments, international decision-makers, NGOs, businesses, educators and the media to work to reduce intolerance and prejudice, and to encourage respect for our common humanity and to foster a culture of peace;
- Governments, communities and international decision-makers to ensure that the voices of women and young people in polarised societies are heard, in order to facilitate their potential to provide a voice of moderation and serve as key activists for peace;
- Governments and armed groups to put an end to the recruitment and deployment of child soldiers, and ensure the rehabilitation of children who have been participants in armed conflict;

<sup>1</sup> <[http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook\\_index.htm](http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook_index.htm)>

<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/code.asp>>.

<sup>3</sup> <[http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/ocha\\_\\_orientation\\_\\_handbook\\_on\\_\\_.htm](http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/ocha__orientation__handbook_on__.htm)>.

## Policy Of The Board

- Governments, the United Nations and international financial institutions to implement effective programs to control the arms trade, promote peaceful alternatives to arms production and cut military spending worldwide;
- All states to commit to a ban on the production, stockpiling, sale and use of all nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, landmines and armaments containing depleted uranium, backed by effective monitoring and compliance mechanisms;
- Governments and international decision-makers to develop and commit to a comprehensive convention on the prevention, suppression and punishment of terrorism;
- Governments and armed groups to refrain from any threat or use of force that violates the UN Charter;
- Accountability of all international military action to the UN, and of domestic armed forces to national governments and citizens;
- The UN to establish a permanent, directly recruited Rapid Reaction Force to hold the peace in a crisis, police gross violations of human rights and support multilateral defence against aggression and genocide;
- All parties to any conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and internationally recognised human rights;
- Governments and international decision-makers to develop workable systems founded on international refugee law to give assistance, protection and asylum for affected populations seeking to escape conflict;
- All states to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and increased international co-operation to ensure the Court's effectiveness;
- The media to build global understanding of the causes and consequences of armed conflict and violence through impartial and sensitive reporting and to ensure that coverage of conflicts occurring in developing countries is not neglected; and
- Further research by governments and NGOs to identify the causes and impacts of conflicts and evaluate the effectiveness of methods of responding to conflict.

## Policy Of The Board



**Title: HIV and AIDS**

**Type: Position policy**

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Policy Serial No. : POS 2.5  
Date of Adoption: June 2006

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### **The Issues**

HIV and AIDS are the fastest growing threat to human development in many developing countries; for example, in South Africa 30% of the population is infected with the virus according to recent government estimates.

The epidemic is having a profound impact on infant, child and maternal mortality, morbidity and life expectancy.

Rising morbidity and mortality rates among the economically active segment of the population are distorting labour markets, disrupting production and consumption, eroding public sector capacity and diminishing national wealth.

As HIV infections rise, poverty deepens. Given this, reducing the incidence and prevalence of HIV is a prerequisite for poverty elimination.

At the individual and household level in developing countries, the consequences of the epidemic include ill health; death and grief; stigma and discrimination; mother-to-child transmission; single parent families; orphaned (often HIV positive) children; caring for themselves or cared for by elderly grandparents; increased unemployment; reduced household labour; and declining household incomes and an increased burden of care.

These consequences are compounded by little or no access to testing and counselling, antiretroviral drugs, treatment for opportunistic infections and other support services. Joint programs with affiliates have provided Oxfam Australia with valuable experience of these issues since 1998.

Women are particularly affected by HIV and AIDS as they are physiologically more vulnerable to infection and less able to negotiate safe sex because of their typically lower status. They have less access to female-controlled prevention methods and appropriate health services. Also, women and children usually assume the role of care-giver for those infected.

Similarly, marginalised groups such as injecting drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men can experience heightened vulnerability to infection due to harassment, criminalisation, discrimination and social exclusion. This results in little or no access to prevention education, clean injection equipment, condoms, treatment and support services.

Stigma and discrimination are major obstacles to effective HIV and AIDS prevention treatment and care. Fear of discrimination prevents people from acknowledging their HIV status and seeking treatment. People with HIV, or suspected of having it, are often turned away from healthcare services, denied housing or employment, shunned by friends and family, abandoned by their spouse, suffer physical violence and are sometimes even murdered.



## Policy Of The Board

The stigma of HIV and AIDS often extends to the next generation, placing an extra burden on children who are trying to deal with the death of their parents while caring for younger siblings.

Global insecurity creates conditions that facilitate the spread of HIV and AIDS, in particular war and armed uprisings, destruction of infrastructure, disruptions to livelihoods and large-scale population movements.

Contributing factors to the spread of HIV under these conditions, as well as those created by natural disasters, include: insecure blood supplies; limited or no access to clean injecting equipment and condoms; the disruption of social norms regulating sexual behaviour; reduced food and income security; increased dependence on sex work; disruptions to health education, treatment and care services; and increased vulnerability of displaced people – especially women and children – to sexual abuse and violence.

The global HIV epidemic, while showing significant regional variation, is still at an early stage. Sub-Saharan Africa is the world's worst-affected region. The virus is spreading rapidly in other regions, however, particularly in South Asia, East Asia and parts of the Pacific.

This spread is facilitated by high population densities, low socio-economic development, high rates of population mobility and official denial.

### **Oxfam Australia principles**

Our view is:

- HIV infection has a profound effect on development (i.e. education, employment, life expectancy, health outcomes, poverty reduction).
- Access to education about the disease, prevention methods and treatment and care for those affected by HIV and AIDS, is a universal right
- All work aimed at poverty eradication must incorporate strong HIV and AIDS components at several levels, including prevention, the integration of prevention and care and the creation of environments that enable the attainment of human rights
- Gender dynamics play a critical role in responses to HIV and AIDS
- Field staff policies will reflect an awareness of, and sensitivity towards, HIV and AIDS, including non-discriminatory employment practices. Personal support will be provided to employees and dependents where relevant

Consequently, we call for:

- The Australian Government to increase its funding commitment to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to its fair share of the Fund's financial needs
- The Australian Government to increase its funding commitment for HIV and AIDS programs internationally.
- Governments in countries where HIV prevalence is extremely high to develop and act on competent HIV and AIDS plans, including the development of human resource capacity and the availability of specific treatment regimes

Appropriate strategies:

## Policy Of The Board

- Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS work into our existing development and emergency response work i.e. livelihoods, water and sanitation programs
- HIV and AIDS focused programming, including seeking partner organisations that are providing much needed services in resource-poor contexts
- Support for the full participation of people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) in our own and partners' activities when determining priorities, setting objectives, developing strategies and implementing HIV related programs
- Promoting HIV and AIDS work in a way that respects the rights of people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS and proactively addresses HIV and AIDS related stigma and discrimination
- Advocacy with the Australian Government, multilateral agencies and the private sector, including advocacy to protect the rights of people in resource-poor settings to access affordable medicines, including anti-retrovirals
- Collaboration with Oxfam affiliates and national and international civil society organisations
- Training for field and Australian-based staff on the impact of HIV on our development work
- Rollout and implementation of the OAU employment policies, including education, prevention, care and treatment for employees and dependants where relevant
- Board training/sensitisation

# Policy Of The Board



**Title: Gender Justice**

**Type: Position policy**

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Policy Serial No. : POS 2.6  
Date of Adoption: March 2007  
Amended: March 2012

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## **Introduction**

Gender justice gives all people, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, equal rights and entitlements to all aspects of human development, including economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights; the same level of respect; the same opportunities to make choices; and the same level of power to shape the outcomes of these choices. Promoting gender justice is promoting human rights. Empowering women empowers communities and is of intrinsic importance to the Oxfam mission of overcoming poverty and suffering. Likewise, empowering people who identify as a gender or sexual minority; that is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex (LGBTQI), is also a significant part of achieving gender justice.

This position policy of the Board informs the public positioning of Oxfam with regard to gender, as well as internal gender strategies and standards, and is consistent with Oxfam International Gender Policy.

## **Issues**

Gender is a social construct, defining the roles, rights, responsibilities, and obligations of boys and girls, women and men, especially in relation to each other and as parents and carers to children. It is also a key factor in the regulation and understanding of sexual identity. The way that society interprets and judges gender roles, rights and responsibilities is a key determinant of women's and men's social and economic position relative to each other in society. Gender and sexual minorities experience this in compounded ways, for example, the choice of occupations for men and women is influenced by accepted social norms and stereotypes. Gender also interacts with sexual orientation, class, caste, race and ethnicity in complex ways to create injustice.

Women have less access to and control than men over economic resources and assets and often receive less remuneration for their work. They are also marginalised and undervalued in the household. This is evidenced in the "missing girls" phenomenon in Asia, where it is estimated that due to the undervaluing of women and girls over 100 million girls are missing as a result of the infanticide of girl children, sex selection for boys, allocation of economic and nutritional resources away from girl children, and generalized violence against women and girls.

Global trade and investment policies can also affect men and women differently. The work of poor women and girls is often physically burdensome and leaves them with little time for other activities. Fewer girls than boys receive an education and almost twice as many women as men are illiterate. Increased migration for short term work by women also leaves them vulnerable for abuse and exploitation in poorly regulated work environments.

Sexual and reproductive health problems are a leading cause of death and disability for women in developing countries, and are the leading cause of death for teenage girls; and HIV/AIDs related conditions are the leading cause of death for women in their reproductive years. If a woman is able to determine the number, timing and spacing of

## Policy Of The Board



her children, and if she is able to practice safe sex and to access HIV testing, treatment and care services she has more opportunity to pursue productive community and individual activities and to secure stable employment and higher wages. The vulnerability of both men and women to HIV is strongly influenced by cultural ideas about masculinity.

Gender inequalities increase women's vulnerability in disaster (natural and human induced), and women are more vulnerable to the effects of global warming. Gender based violence, particularly violence against women and against gender and sexual minorities, is a global phenomenon that is at last being recognised. It is a result of unequal power relations between men and women, and in many places violence against women and gender minorities, is part of the gender identity for men.

Eighty percent of the world's refugees are women and children, and violence against women, including rape, has become commonplace in conflicts worldwide, and is used as a weapon of war and intimidation

More men than women hold formal positions of power. There are very few female representatives at the highest level. Only 14% of countries have achieved the target of 30% women in national parliament set in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action; although women are beginning to be better represented at local government levels.

The way in which institutions of authority, such as religions and governments, operate in relation to gender roles and their visions for development often exacerbates inequalities. Within the context where religion is increasingly politicized, and gender is seen as the battle ground for ideological gains, the focus on pursuing gender justice is all the more relevant.

Mainstreaming gender is a priority and Oxfam Australia will move more directly to challenge existing power structures that privilege men; to respond to local cultural contexts, and maintain a focus on women's rights, including access to resources, power, and work. It will also include the rights of gender and sexual minorities in its work.

### **Oxfam Australia Principles**

Oxfam Australia takes a rights-based approach to its work, and specifically recognises women's rights and those of gender minorities. Oxfam Australia recognises that gender is socially constructed in ways that disempower women and those who do not conform to dominant gender norms. Gender justice requires transformation of existing power and power structures, and such a transformation brings with it real risk and danger to change agents including Oxfam partners. Oxfam Australia recognises the obligation of states, and non-state actors including NGOs, to fulfil, protect and respect women's rights and those of gender minorities.

Applying a rights-based approach to gender, Oxfam Australia will:

1. Base its work on a common understanding that gender justice is fundamental to overcoming poverty and suffering.
2. While OAU respects and values diversity and cultural differences, as a human rights organisation, it will not condone, tolerate or perpetuate discrimination or harmful practices based on culture, religion or tradition. In turn, we will support individuals and groups seeking to speak out against human rights abuses that occur in their communities.
3. Recognise that gender-based violence is an expression of unequal power relations.

## Policy Of The Board

4. Work with women and men to raise the status of women and girls, and gender minorities, to achieve gender justice.
5. Work with local women's organisations and the women's movement to advance the rights of women.
6. Value the work and roles that women perform, and promote equal pay for equal work and recognise the unequal burden of unpaid work that falls specifically to women.
7. Identify and address the differential impact of development programs on women and men that results from the power imbalance between them, and take into account the fact that gender minorities may experience this differential impact in compounded ways.
8. Work with partner organizations to advance the rights of gender and sexual minorities.
9. Recognise the need for context and community specific responses to programs that target gender inequality.
10. Within our commitment to fundamental human rights, acknowledge Indigenous perspectives, contexts and lived experiences.

### **Oxfam Australia will act to:**

- A. Develop gender plans and budgets in all program areas, and gender analysis to plan and assess programs and to monitor their outcomes.
- B. Model best practice in gender justice and ensure that our internal ways of working reflect our commitment to this.
- C. Protect people from discrimination based on gender and sexual identity.
- D. Ensure that staff have specialist training and are provided with sufficient resources to implement this policy.

Consequently, Oxfam Australia calls on governments, NGOs, bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors, international decision-makers, educators, businesses, and the media to:

1. Adopt a rights-based approach to issues of gender and sexual identity.
2. Develop gender plans that include specific gender analysis and/ gender audits to monitor and evaluate the implementation of their programs to ensure they achieve gender justice, this includes allocating gender budgeting to projects and programs that contribute to the target of achieving gender justice.
3. Analyse power relationships between women and men and actively challenge dominant discourses that perpetuate gender injustices, including those against gender minorities.
4. Specifically prioritise and develop programs to address gender based violence, particularly violence against women and gender and sexual minorities. These programs will look at violence as a structural issue in society and ensure that those responsible for implementing laws and policies that protect women and gender minorities from sexual and gender based violence (police, judicial system) are held to account for their implementation.

## Policy Of The Board

5. Support women in achieving leadership positions in their communities and ensure that the voices of women and gender minorities are heard and acted upon in decision-making forums and the media.
6. Provide specific support for women's organisations and the women's movement, where they are promoting and upholding women's rights.
7. Provide specific support for gender minority organisations movements, which are promoting and upholding the rights of gender minorities.
8. Encourage men along with women to act as change agents to address gender injustice.
9. Abide by the international conventions on women's rights as defined in key UN instruments, in particular the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and also the Millennium Development Goals, which deal with women's empowerment and access to educational and resources.
10. Prioritise work towards women's empowerment as detailed in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) 1995, the MDGs, and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on protecting women in conflict.

<sup>4</sup> **This policy is to be read in conjunction with Oxfam Australia's Position Policy, POS 2.5 HIV and AIDS, June 2006. See [http://www.oxfam.org.au/about/policy/POL/2\\_5.html](http://www.oxfam.org.au/about/policy/POL/2_5.html)**

<sup>5</sup> Sources: Grown, C., Rao Gupta, G., Kes, A. (2005). *UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality*; UNDP. (2006). *Gender and Trade: Women and Employment* available at [http://www.eldis.org/trade/Gender\\_trade\\_employment.htm](http://www.eldis.org/trade/Gender_trade_employment.htm), last accessed July 2006; UNFPA (2005). *State of World Population 2005: The Promise of Equality*; Oxfam International. (2004). *Trading away our rights: Women in the global supply chain*. Title: Gender Justice

Type: Position policy

## Title: Humanitarian Response Policy

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Oxfam Australia plays an important role within the humanitarian system through its programs in vulnerable communities and advocacy for an improved humanitarian system. This document communicates the principles with which we respond to (and prepare for) humanitarian crises created by armed conflict and/or catastrophic environmental events or trends.

Oxfam Australia believes the impacts upon people of armed conflict and disaster can be minimised through effective humanitarian systems at the local, national, regional and international level. Fundamentally, we see humanitarian action along a continuum of social change which ensures that people can live in full realisation of their human rights.

For the purpose of this document, the phrase 'humanitarian response' refers to responses to disasters which overwhelm the local capacity to respond effectively, or armed conflicts which threaten to or deprive human rights.

### Trends affecting humanitarian response

There are three key trends that are likely to increase the incidence of armed conflicts or disasters, intensify their impacts upon people and complicate our ability to respond. These three trends are:

1. Increasing vulnerability—poverty, increasing global inequality, population growth, urbanisation, gender inequality and HIV and AIDS, is placing more people in harm's way than ever before.
2. Climate change is increasing the severity and frequency of environmental disasters, and
3. Erosion in the distinction between civilians and combatants in war.

#### *Increasing vulnerability*

Indications are that global populations will increase from 6.6 billion to 8 billion by 2025 with 99 percent of that growth occurring in developing countries.<sup>4</sup> Much of this growth is expected to occur in cities. By 2030, 5 billion people are expected to live in cities, 2 billion of whom will be slum dwellers.<sup>5</sup> According to UN Habitat, '...the locus of poverty is moving to cities'.<sup>6</sup> Urban poverty forces people to reside in unsuitable locations prone to environmental disaster or pollution; people reside without adequate housing, health services or education. There is a higher risk of epidemics/pandemics and more sharply observed inequalities between people. Violent conflict is also common in urban slum settings. This trend coupled with the fierce competition for scarce natural resources (oil,

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<sup>4</sup> Population Reference Bureau, *2006 World Population Data Sheet*. Accessed online: <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2006/2006WorldPopulationDataSheet.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis, *Tomorrow's Crises Today: The Humanitarian Impact of Urbanisation*. Accessed online: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=73996>

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

## Policy Of The Board

gas, metals, minerals), the continuing HIV and AIDS crisis and persistent gender inequality, has the potential to place more people in harm's way than ever before.

### *Climate change*

It has been unequivocally established that global warming is occurring and will increase with or without dramatic reductions in carbon emissions in both developing and developed economies.<sup>7</sup> The repercussions for subtropical nations, where most impoverished people live, will be extensive due to reduced precipitation having the primary effect of decreased water supplies and rising sea levels. Therefore increasing the frequency of environmental disasters and the severity of their effects upon vulnerable populations who live in arid and low lying coastal regions and those who lack government sponsored safety nets, reserve incomes and adequate health infrastructure. Climate change has also been linked to conflict, particularly in regions where access to resources are limited.

### *Eroding distinction between civilians and combatants in armed conflict*

Humanitarian agencies rely on warring parties to respect the distinction between combatants and civilians in order to access vulnerable populations. Where government armed forces, their contractors, and/or non-state armed actors do not respect this distinction, unarmed humanitarian agencies often cannot provide life sustaining aid due to unacceptable threats to their staff and operations. Five main trends are eroding this distinction:

1. acts of aggression and/or restrictions upon humanitarian access to civilians by government and non-state actors
2. the availability of high-powered small arms and light weapons in the civilian population
3. the partisan use of 'humanitarian' aid to achieve military or state objectives ('hearts and minds' operations)
4. non-uniformed armed actors and the use of civilians and civilian infrastructure for military purposes and/or protection
5. conflicts between those with extremist ideologies which are incompatible with the humanitarian concept of combatant/civilian.

### **Oxfam Australia principles**

Oxfam Australia is a rights-based organisation. We work to assist people in realising their rights and we advocate with governments and other relevant authorities in order that they fulfil their responsibilities. We work as part of the Oxfam International confederation which commits resources on a global scale to humanitarian response and to poverty eradication. The overall goal of Oxfam International's humanitarian operations is to

...contribute to lifting the performance and the accountability of the humanitarian system, of which it is a part, so that all women and men in humanitarian crises will be assured both the protection and the assistance they require, when they require it and for as long as they require it, irrespective of who or where they are or of how they are afflicted.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis, Summary for Policy Makers*. Accessed online: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

<sup>8</sup> Oxfam International, *Humanitarian Operational Plan 2007-08*.



## Policy Of The Board

Our programs involve three essential components:

1. Reducing people's vulnerability to crisis through building community and government capacity to avoid humanitarian emergencies through long-term development projects and disaster risk reduction
2. Advocacy with authority holders to take responsibility for ensuring citizens receive the protection and assistance they require
3. Responding independently and with partner organisations to provide humanitarian assistance in times of overwhelming need.

### **Oxfam Australia guiding principles—operational**

The following are also key principles of concern:

- *Local ownership of programs*—Oxfam Australia will only provide direct humanitarian assistance where there is insufficient local capacity. In those cases, efforts will be made to work with local partners and beneficiaries to increase capacity in order to build local ownership to ensure a smooth transition to sustainable reconstruction activities. We will also involve local communities in the monitoring and evaluation processes to assess our accountability. Oxfam Australia will always be conscious of not 'substituting' local capacity.
- *Gender equity*—Women are disproportionately affected in humanitarian emergencies and often act as the primary care givers during times of crisis. As a priority Oxfam Australia will develop and resource programs that address the social inequalities and needs of women. The programs will not only aim to meet women's particular needs, but also promote women's participation and leadership.
- *Do No Harm*—Oxfam Australia endeavours to ensure that the humanitarian assistance it provides does not fuel further conflict, contribute to the benefit of one side in a conflict or undermine local capacity.
- *Protection*—to ensure our humanitarian response reinforces the capacity of civilians to protect themselves in a non-violent manner.
- *Sexual exploitation*—Oxfam Australia is committed to preventing the sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries.
- *Respect to culture and custom*—within our commitment to fundamental human rights, we will acknowledge local perspectives and contexts in our humanitarian responses.

When responding to humanitarian emergencies, Oxfam Australia staff members will apply the principles of the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes*<sup>9</sup> (below). Principles 1-4 outline the core concepts of humanitarianism, impartiality, non-partisanship in armed conflict and independence.

1. The humanitarian imperative comes first
2. Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone
3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint
4. We shall endeavor not to be used as an instrument of government foreign policy
5. We shall respect culture and custom

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/57JMNB>

## Policy Of The Board

6. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities
7. Ways shall be found to involve program beneficiaries in the management of relief aid
8. Relief aid must strive to reduce vulnerabilities to future disaster as well as meeting basic needs
9. We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources
10. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified human beings, not hopeless objects.

Oxfam Australia is also guided by the Sphere Project Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response aimed at improving the effectiveness and accountability of our operations and the People in Aid Code which is aimed at providing a high level of support to staff who work under highly stressful and often dangerous conditions.

**In meeting the challenges of humanitarian emergencies, Oxfam Australia seeks to influence the international humanitarian community, relevant duty bearers at all levels of government, the United Nations secretariat and the member states of the United Nations, in particular the Australian Government, to:**

1. *Commit resources to ensure civilians are protected.* Where people's rights are threatened, deprived or abused on a large scale, relevant duty bearers must commit adequate resources to prevent further suffering. The 'responsibility to protect' is a principle endorsed through paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document and Security Council Resolution 1674 which confirms that there is a collective international responsibility to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The principle establishes a range of mechanisms by which the international community can support governments to prevent armed conflict, intervene when armed conflict arises and reconstruct in the post conflict period.
2. *Ensure that populations vulnerable in times of armed conflict and disaster realise their right to humanitarian assistance.* Oxfam advocates for a humanitarian system that is capable of providing the right kind of assistance to the people most in need at the right time. Many people die needlessly waiting for life-saving humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of a disaster. The international community must continue its work in implementing international agreements such as the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness,<sup>10</sup> and ensure that development and humanitarian policy is premised on the needs of vulnerable populations, not narrow interpretations of national interest.
3. *Work towards effective international, regional and state mechanisms to control the trade and use of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and the disuse of weapons which do not distinguish between civilians and combatants, such as cluster munitions and landmines.* There are around 639 million small arms and light weapons in the world today. Eight million more are produced every year. Without strict control, such weapons will continue to fuel armed conflict, state repression,

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<sup>10</sup> Paris Declaration - [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org) Good Humanitarian Donorship principles [www.goodhumanitariananddonorship.org](http://www.goodhumanitariananddonorship.org)

## Policy Of The Board

crime and domestic abuse. They are a major barrier to human security and development.

4. *Support programs which promote women's participation and leadership*—women and children bear a disproportionate impact in humanitarian crises and gender-based violence has become a common and pernicious reality in war. The international humanitarian system must adequately address the particular impacts upon women and children and adequately resource gender equality strategies within humanitarian response.
5. *Continue to financially support the work of independent humanitarian and human rights agencies and support their ability to monitor and criticise governments' human rights adherence.*

*Undertake extensive analysis of the humanitarian threats from global processes such as climate change.* Ensure communities/countries are supported to develop disaster risk reduction plans and have the ability to rapidly respond to events which have the potential to create humanitarian emergencies.

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<sup>vii</sup> Oxfam International (2009) *Suffering the Science: Climate, People and Poverty* [www.oxfam.org/en/policy/bp130-suffering-the-science](http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/bp130-suffering-the-science)

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<sup>viii</sup> Global Humanitarian Forum (2009) *Human Impact Report: Climate Change – The Anatomy of a Silent Crisis*. [www.ghf-ge.org](http://www.ghf-ge.org) Geneva.

Smith, J.B. *et al.* (2009) *Assessing Dangerous Climate Change Through an Update of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) "Reasons for Concern"* Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA 106, 4133-4137. <http://www.pnas.org/content/106/11/4133.abstract>

<sup>ix</sup> Rockström J., Steffen W., Noone K., *et al.* (2009) *A safe operating space for humanity*. Nature, 461, 472-475. <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/planetary-boundaries>

<sup>x</sup> Hansen, J. *et al.* (2008) *"Target Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>: Where Should Humanity Aim?"* Open Atmospheric Science Journal. 217,-218).

<sup>xi</sup> For more information on the UNFCCC see: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

<sup>xii</sup> For example, local initiatives like the NSW Community Climate Summit <http://www.nccnsw.org.au/media/nsw-community-discusses-response-critical-issue-climate-change> and global processes like WorldWideViews on Global Warming <http://www.wvviews.org/>

<sup>xiii</sup> Oxfam International (2009) *People-Centred Resilience - Working with vulnerable farmers towards climate change adaptation and food security* Oxfam Briefing Paper 135. [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org).

Oxfam International (2010) *Climate Change Adaptation. Enabling people living in poverty to adapt*. Oxfam International Research Report, April 2010. [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)

<sup>xiv</sup> Oxfam International (2010) *Righting two wrongs - Making a new Global Climate Fund work for poor people*. Oxfam Briefing Note October 2010. [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)