

# OXFAM GB'S DECOLONIAL PARTNERSHIPS STRATEGY IN SUMMARY

## WHY THE FOCUS ON DECOLONIAL?

While formal colonization has mostly ended, its influence on how we think and act remains today. Colonization saw one group of people believing they were “better than” others. It provided them with the justification and authority to exploit, infantilize, and dictate to those they see as “lesser than”. This sense of superiority persists today, often unquestioned, and means that power is still skewed towards former colonial empires in the Global North. Within the aid sector, this manifests as:

### COMMAND AND CONTROL

Command and control through complex policies or processes that don't consider local contexts. As a result, they can be hard to follow, and cause exhaustion and confusion. It's a system that ends up degrading people, labeling their practices as 'insufficient', while the colonial controlling culture is upheld as 'efficient' and 'progressive'.

### PATERNALISM/SAVIOURISM

Paternalism/saviourism emerging from the belief that one group of people has superior knowledge or 'expertise' and, as a result, have the power and right to teach or 'help' those that are 'lesser than'. Among other things, it's enabled by a sense of goodness, of having high education levels, technical skills, and facility with language.

### REINFORCEMENT

Reinforcement of colonized people feeling 'lesser' and in need of 'correction'. It's down to how colonization devalued and replaced languages and cultures, shaping how people see themselves. It left people aspiring to be 'civilized and educated' in ways defined by colonial masters instead of valuing their own indigenous cultures.



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## OXFAM GB'S DECOLONIAL AMBITION

Our ambition is to redress how colonialism still shapes our thoughts and actions. Our intention is to ensure more effective and respectful ways of working. Our vision is of an independent civil society in the Global South, and a radically better world for us all.

## OUR PLAN

### WHY

We'll not achieve racial justice until we remove and replace the effect of colonization on how we think and act, rebalancing the unequal power between the Global North and South. This is vital to overcoming poverty, and it's core to our belief that there is no them, just us.

### WHO: PARTNERS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

This is about Oxfam GB's relationships with teams based in the Global South and the partners they work with (including community groups, activists, NGOs etc).

### WHAT: DECOLONIZED PARTNERSHIPS

We've been trying to rebalance power in our partnerships for years. But, since committing to shifting power to 'local' organizations in our new strategy in 2020, we've given this work greater focus. There's been progress, but there's so much more to do,

to learn and to unlearn. Decolonization is an ongoing process, not an end in itself. We must continuously:

- Build practices that recognize people's inherent dignity and abilities
- Ensure people of all races are fairly treated
- Improve trust and accountability
- Repair harm caused in the past, ensuring we don't cause harm in the future

### HOW: WITH RESPECT, SOLIDARITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Our partners named these as vital to decolonial partnerships. They must be at the heart of all our relationships and behaviour with partners.

### HOW WE'LL KNOW IT'S WORKING

We'll know it's working when partners choose to work with us because of our offer as part of the movement against poverty and inequality, and because we enable them to do their work, rather than simply because we hold and control resources.



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