

OXFAM GB'S DECOLONIAL PARTNERSHIPS STRATEGY

PUTTING RESPECT, SOLIDARITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY
AT THE HEART OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTNERS



OXFAM



Our vision is of
an independent
civil society in the
Global South, and
a radically better
world for us all.



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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.

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.

INTRODUCTION

We hope everyone will be able to see their role in contributing to this work, as it's essential to creating a better world for everyone.

We recognize that some might find this work emotional. For example, you're at the start of the difficult and often upsetting realisation of how coloniality and structural racism exists in today's societies and in all our mindsets. Or it may be because you've personally experienced harm from colonial behaviour. It may also be because some of the anti-racist language we deliberately use

in this paper carries different meanings for you (please see glossary at the end of the document for clarity on what we mean by certain terms). However you respond to this strategy, we hope that your conclusion is one of excitement that we're on this courageous path together, towards a more effective organization that is true to its values, and that everyone can feel a sense of belonging to.

// ...we hope that your conclusion is one of excitement that we're on this courageous path together, towards a more effective organization... //

WHY

There's been a recent shift in the international 'aid' sector towards decolonization and anti-racism.

This followed the murder of George Floyd in 2020, and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. Globally, no sector was left unchanged. Including in the 'aid' sector, where structural and systemic racism have been highlighted, by initiatives such as Pledge for Change, Charter for Change, Peace Direct, and Reimagination of INGOs (RINGO). They helped to identify ways of working in the sector that are rooted in racial assumptions and colonialism, and can be unhelpful to Southern civil society¹. They've also proposed ways to affect change, and have laid out principles and standards² that can be used to guide and track decolonized approaches. These initiatives have helped to create momentum and accountability for the sector's efforts to decolonize. Oxfam is part of this movement for change – tackling inequality is vital to overcoming poverty and it is core to what we believe in – that there is no them, just us.

TO ACHIEVE OXFAM'S COMMITMENT TO ANTI-RACISM, WE NEED A COMPREHENSIVE EFFORT TO DECOLONIZE.

In publishing our strategy for a radically better world in 2020, we committed to becoming an anti-racist organization. This work to decolonize our partnerships is a crucial step towards achieving that commitment, and is part of our broader work to understand what racial justice looks like at Oxfam.

Systemic racism is a legacy of colonialism. While formal colonization has mostly ended, it has left behind attitudes and behaviours that are deeply engrained in our societies and institutions. Whether we realise it or not, the colonial practice of granting greater power and value to white people has had a profound and lasting impact on our societies, culture, and psyches – it affects how we think and behave.

1 85% of the 609 civil society organizations from the Global South surveyed by the RINGO Project felt that their relationship with INGOs was not mutually beneficial (Fostering Equitable North-South Civil Society Partnerships – Voices from the South, Rights CoLab and WACSI, March 2021)

2 The Pledge for Change lays out 3 core pledges that INGOs are invited to commit to : 1) Equitable Partnerships, 2) Authentic Storytelling, 3) Influencing for Wider Change, <https://pledgeforchange2030.org/>

THE 'AID' SECTOR BEGAN IN COLONIAL TIMES, SO IT'S NO WONDER THE UNEQUAL POWER STRUCTURES REMAIN.

Within the sector, including Oxfam, this sense of superiority is evident through 'generally accepted' systems, behaviours and mindsets that perpetuate an imbalance of power³. So, with open hearts and minds, we must identify and address inequity in our systems and relationships, building practices that recognize people's inherent dignity and capabilities. We must also acknowledge people's histories and the damage inflicted by colonialism on cultures and societies, including how replacing people's language and practices has reinforced a power imbalance. And we must collectively establish new ways of working and partnerships that systematically ensure people of all races are fairly treated, with a close eye on other oppressions that exclude and harm people (such as sexism, transphobia, and ableism). This all requires shared trust and accountability.

A RADICAL TRANSFORMATION OF OUTDATED AND UNEQUAL WAYS OF WORKING IS NEEDED.

Within Oxfam and in the wider 'aid' sector, the split between 'international' and 'local' action needs to be rebalanced and reflected in more equal partnerships. Black, Indigenous and People of Colour in the Global South have long been developing solutions to poverty and other injustices, and better thinking is needed on how to position ourselves alongside their work to respect and strengthen it, not overpower it. Oxfam is not at the beginning of this journey as we have long tried to rebalance and equalise power in our partnerships.⁴ In November 2020, Oxfam GB launched a new strategy placing 'local partnerships' as central to achieving a radically better world. Decolonization of the

organization as a whole, however, is a new process which looks at the need to radically redress and take responsibility for power imbalances and our colonial past.

THIS STRATEGY IS AN INTENTIONAL MOVE TO IDENTIFY, DECONSTRUCT, AND REPLACE COLONIAL PRACTICES.

In so doing, we'll build an approach that's firmly grounded in Oxfam's values, in solidarity with Global South activists and change makers. Not only will this lead to better outcomes as a more effective and informed approach to tackling poverty and inequality – it is, quite simply, the right thing to do.

DECOLONIZATION IS AN ONGOING PROCESS.

This strategy must not be seen as static, but rather a commitment from Oxfam to move through the stages of transformative change, learning and unlearning as we go. It's not an end in itself, but a means to continuously improving the quality and integrity of the impact we're striving for in the world.

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³ There are many examples of these in our management structures (uncontested hierarchies of command and control), belief systems (that most civil society groups in the South have a capacity deficit, and that Northern INGOs don't), the people we work with (including formal civil society organizations that reflect our own structures, approaches, and class/education biases) and funding processes (with a fair share of operational/administrative resources rarely offered).

⁴ The biography of the BRAC founder (Hope Over Fate, 2022, Fazle Hasan Abed, Scott MacMillan) notes that the Oxfam Field Director in Bangladesh in 1972 (then the world's 2nd poorest country, emerging from one of the world's worst conflicts, with destroyed infrastructure) pushed for more assistance to local organizations – and issued a \$430k grant.

OUR VISION & AIM

Our vision is of an autonomous and independent civil society in the Global South that is able to pursue its own agenda and deliver a radically better world.

Our aim is for Oxfam GB to be divested from racialised and colonial power by:

- Decolonizing our internal systems, policies, and practice
- Being accountable to colleagues and partners in the Global South
- Acting in solidarity with civil society groups in the Global South
- Ultimately, becoming a 'Partner of Choice' to country teams and Global South civil society

WHO DO WE MEAN BY 'PARTNER'?

Oxfam has relationships with many actors who we work with, from international coalitions to corporate partners. We have the ambition to be a more empowering partner in all of our relationships but this strategy specifically relates to our partnerships with the following:

- **Southern Oxfams** – including Oxfam International teams based in countries where we work and Oxfam affiliates⁵ based in the Global South. These Southern parts of the Oxfam network share many common systems and processes with Oxfam GB, and in some cases may even be subsidiary entities of Oxfam GB. Therefore, our relationships with them are often shaped by unequal power dynamics, especially given that Oxfam GB often holds funds and other resources.
- **Southern partner organizations** – these organizations are independent from Oxfam who we work with through Southern Oxfam affiliates and other Oxfam International teams in the Global South. They include community organizations, activist groups, Non-Government Organizations, businesses, trade unions or social movements. Oxfam GB does not directly partner with these organizations, but supports teams in the Global South to do so, through their programme activities. Oxfam GB policies, systems, processes and practices will shape how Oxfam teams are able to work with these Southern partners.

⁵ We're Oxfam Great Britain – one of 21 affiliate organizations worldwide (number correct at time of publishing) that make up the Oxfam International confederation. An up-to-date list can be found [here](#).

We have chosen to focus on these partners as a first priority, because they have historically been at the interface of Oxfam’s colonial heritage. It’s important to note that these partners are predominantly based in Global South countries and are largely staffed by Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. It is in these relationships, that we are most likely to see the effect of the changes we implement – our choices as Oxfam GB will have direct consequences for the nature and quality of relationships with those we work directly with and their partnerships with others. Our intention is that this strategy will deepen our learning and confidence in decolonial practices, which will go on to inform our partnerships with other stakeholders too.

TRANSFORMING OUR APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIPS

This strategy seeks to support a transformation in how Oxfam GB partners with others, and how power and accountabilities work within these relationships. The way we share funding, how we make decisions, and our assurance and compliance requirements must be appropriate for who we’re partnering with. Structurally, our connection with Southern parts of Oxfam (Oxfam affiliates and Oxfam International teams) is fundamentally different to the organizations that we partner with through them. The degree of autonomy varies among these different partners and so the nature of our partnerships and how we decolonize them must also be distinct. We need to ensure that each is proportionate and appropriate for all parties, with a fair balance of power, while also balancing the needs of Oxfam and its legal and regulatory obligations in each country. To do this effectively we will need to engage in a constructive dialogue with partners.

// This strategy seeks to support a transformation in how Oxfam GB partners with others, and how power and accountabilities work within these relationships **//**

WHAT WE'LL DO

WE'LL CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR CHANGE

The ambitions laid out in this strategy need us to disrupt the status quo, both within Oxfam and the wider sector. This is why a bold, courageous and innovative approach is needed, and why this strategy is such an important step for Oxfam. In solidarity with country teams and global civil society, we're helping to transform the current aid infrastructure – offering support that's respectful, being aware of our power, and working intentionally to shift it. This will mean, in part, acting on opportunities for change identified by colleagues, partner organizations, and community groups in the Global South. We want partners to choose to work with us because of our whole offer, and because we enable them to do their work, rather than simply because we hold and control resources.

Here's how we plan to create the conditions for change:

WE'LL BUILD PRACTICES THAT RECOGNIZE PEOPLE'S INHERENT DIGNITY AND ABILITIES

We commit to shifting the balance of decision making power away from Oxfam GB. This means reviewing our systems, policies and processes with recognition of and respect for knowledge and expertise from the Global South. It will include funding practices that allow us to shift resources and decision making, providing flexible funding with no restrictions on how it will be spent or for how long it will be available (for example via the Partnership Investment Fund⁶). And it'll involve reshaping how we produce research and knowledge. Partner identification, assessment and selection approach must be jointly owned. It's a reality that judgements and evaluations will still need to be made by Oxfam about its partners, but who within Oxfam leads this and the way in which it is done will be very different. Frameworks will be co-designed with Southern Oxfam teams in the lead while Oxfam GB seeks to minimise compliance and mitigate risk on the basis of stronger trusting relationships and mutual accountability. Our aim is for systems and processes that enable the autonomy of country teams and other partners, clearly defining Oxfam GB's offer as one of solidarity not control.

⁶ Oxfam GB has created a Partnership Investment Fund to provide flexible funding to partner organizations in the Global South. Partners receiving the funding will have full control over how they spend the money to support their visions and strategies. The decision about who receives the funding sits with Oxfam teams in the Global South. Among other things, it enables progressive work that's often thought too difficult or 'experimental' to fund. Reporting requirements are there, but are minimal and mainly focused on a small number of learning questions.

WE'LL ENSURE PEOPLE OF ALL RACES ARE FAIRLY TREATED

We aim for our partnerships to be equal, redressing historical power imbalances. We'll respect that partners and Oxfam colleagues bring reflections and experiences from their own lives and contexts, and can contribute invaluable skills and expertise to Oxfam's work. This is a process of learning and unlearning for everyone at Oxfam GB, as well as for Oxfam country teams and other partners in the Global South. We also recognize that Black, Indigenous and People of Colour have developed survival strategies to endure colonialism and racism, which may include adopting colonial behaviours and mindsets. This isn't just work for white colleagues in the Global North to do, this is for all of us. While this work is vital and urgent, we must also allow time and space to reflect on and engage with the effects of coloniality on our own practices.

WE'LL IMPROVE TRUST AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We'll ensure two-way accountability between Oxfam GB and our partners, so that we can hold each other to account on the quality of our support and solidarity, and be held to account for our commitments to anti-racism. We'll develop a mechanism that centres racial justice and a reparative approach, creating a safe space where Oxfam GB will listen, learn and be held to account. This may mean Oxfam GB reporting to our partners annually, or partners providing regular feedback on the way we interact with them. We will carefully balance this with our need to fulfil our responsibilities to regulators, supporters, and funders. We'll manage this complexity of accountabilities, seeking to be minimal but firm in the requirements and principles we need our partners to commit to. And we'll prioritize accountability on vital issues such as safeguarding and anti money laundering policies. This is our decolonial partnership offer: a two-way relationship on a more equal footing.

REPAIR HARM CAUSED IN THE PAST, ENSURING WE DON'T CAUSE HARM IN THE FUTURE

The conversation on reparations in the sector is rapidly evolving. We'll actively seek to contribute to and learn from it. At this moment, we believe our reparative approach involves:

- Acknowledging and understanding the nature of past wrongs, taking responsibility for and seeking to put them right, helping to heal harm caused (e.g. an apology, changing policy and ways of working, or compensation).
- Supporting communities we work with to reclaim their rights and pursue reparations for harms caused to them (e.g. harms caused by corporates, climate change, or colonial systems).
- Calling on power holders to take a reparative approach, to recognize and be held accountable for harms they've caused (e.g. right now, via Loss and Damage funding to address climate-related harms).

WE'LL REDEFINE, REDESIGN, REMOVE AND CO-CREATE

To define our activity, we'll focus on criteria used by WASCI and RINGO, designed specifically for the International NGO context. We will:

REDEFINE

Redefine our leadership, behaviour and identity in order to rebalance power, with anti-racism and feminism at the centre. This includes redefining our overall approach to partnerships as more equal and collaborative. It means redefining what we mean by 'partner' so that we're sure to include Oxfam teams in the Global South and all others who have been harmed by how power has been held in the past. It also includes redefining how we think about our partners, with trust in and respect for their knowledge, skills and experiences.

7 This is covered in more detail in the paper for Risk and Audit Committee in November 2022, Decolonial Partnerships – risk and compliance perspectives.

REDESIGN

Redesign a number of Oxfam GB policies and procedures that will enable better partnerships, including our approach to risk and compliance⁷, the systems for engaging with partners, and how we are held to account by them. The knowledge of Oxfam country teams and their leadership will also be integrated throughout the redesign of our operations – from finance to human resources. And we'll redesign our funding targets to provide more unrestricted and flexible funding to local partners. For example, in 2021 our funds and roles were split 50:50 between Oxfam GB and Oxfam teams in the Global South, and now we're working towards a 30:70 split.

REMOVE

Remove harmful systems and practices that sustain colonial power, and blockers that lead to behaviour that discriminates and harms – such as barriers to understanding, attitudes of white saviourism, and outdated policies. This also involves removing the things that prevent the autonomy of Oxfam country offices, which were identified through the research process for this strategy. Examples include removing the unequal control Oxfam GB has over decisions about who we partner with, or removing the laborious reporting requirements that can prevent progressive work from happening.

CO-CREATE

Co-create with and for our partners a shared understanding of what shifting power and racial justice mean for Oxfam GB in practice. We'll continue to develop a racial justice action plan and engage UK stakeholders (staff, volunteers, donors and partners) on how racial justice and decolonization are vital to achieving our charitable objectives. We'll also co-create decolonial models of funding for Oxfam. Our recent move in this direction was to focus unrestricted funding on a small number of strategically selected countries, increase from one to three-year grants, and minimise reporting requirements. This will require the development of an appropriate funding strategy, including close working with progressive funders and influencing of traditional funders, to ensure that funds can be channelled and structured in a helpful way for Southern partners.

(For more detail, read about [our commitments to Transforming for a Radically Better World](#))

// Redefine our leadership, behaviour and identity in order to rebalance power, with anti-racism and feminism at the centre **//**

HOW: APPROACH AND PRINCIPLES

Developing this strategy was a complex and important process for Oxfam. It was vital that the methodology we used was decolonial and inclusive, to start as we mean to go on.

We ran a process that involved 130 colleagues from Oxfam teams around the world, which provided a critical space for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour to: a) share their experiences of Oxfam GB as a partner, b) show us how colonialism shows up in our behaviour and systems, and c) offer their expertise in how to make improvements. Here we note appreciation for the energy given to this process by all involved. Coming out of that process, this strategy has the following principles at its heart:

RESPECT

Respect for how Black, Indigenous and People of Colour in the Global South are vital actors and leaders in the movement against poverty and inequality, and our intention to work in a way that's respectful and enables people to heal from the harm imposed by colonialism.

SOLIDARITY

Solidarity with partners – recognising and enabling the leadership, autonomy, and independence of Global South civil society, and building a more effective and transformed aid system.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability for delivering this strategy and the creation of decolonial and equal partnerships that are appropriate to the different types of partners we work with in the Global South.

Everything about our relationships and behaviour with partners must be built on these core values of respect, solidarity, and accountability. This requires a continuous loop of listening, learning, evaluating, and adapting. There are three main areas of action to ensure we maintain this approach:

1. Using a 'web of change' methodology
2. Learning through doing
3. Rethinking how we're held accountable

THE WEB OF CHANGE

The Web of Change is a tool developed by Oxfam GB to map out and analyse the many facets of partnership, and to identify and plan the changes needed across the whole organization in order to decolonize. The Web of Change enables each department to:

- lay out its own role in the process of creating partnerships
- listen to feedback from Oxfam colleagues around the world
- develop ‘power maps’ to identify the colonial roots and blockers of issues and interdependencies
- develop racially just solutions to these.

It also helps to identify how the external environment impacts on how we operate, enabling us to design better influencing strategies aligned with our commitment to solidarity.

Already the Web of Change methodology has enabled Oxfam GB to pinpoint critical challenges in the process of decolonizing, and to find ways through these. For example, risk and compliance processes were identified as a key blocker. The Web of Change enabled a detailed understanding of assumptions about what was driving risk and compliance in the organization. Now, a cross organizational working group is developing a shared approach to risk and compliance in a decolonial way.

This methodology helps us to step back and see the full picture of what’s working and what needs fixing, to understand the complexities, and to identify the power imbalances and the context that’s driving them – all with a focus on moving away from colonial and racialised power structures.

LEARNING THROUGH DOING – BUILDING A PROTOTYPE

During the first three years of the strategy, a prototype will be developed to explore and test the potential solutions identified through the Web of Change process. The prototype will be co-created with Oxfam GB and teams in the Global South and will involve countries where we have partners working on areas related to our global strategy⁸. The prototype will be funded, so that teams who participate are able to engage without causing pressure on their own budgets. Over the three-year period, we will live test the prototype, adapting and reframing the model according to what we learn about how we’re experienced as a decolonial partner. It will be supported by a working group made up of colleagues from across the Oxfam International confederation in order to link learning into the wider Oxfam network. Exactly what the prototype includes will be determined through the Web of Change process, but options comprise of:

- Making unrestricted funding more widely accessible to Oxfam teams in participating countries so they can have more autonomy over how funds are spent.
- Developing a decolonial model of approaches to risk, risk management and compliance.
- Improving compliance processes for teams spending funds, including reduced reporting.
- With the participating country teams, co-creating and agreeing ways to measure the impact of those funds based on trust (reducing the onerous burden of compliance).

⁸ These include tackling extreme vulnerability (rights resilience and response) and challenging global inequalities (valuing all women’s work, and climate justice).

RETHINKING HOW WE'RE HELD ACCOUNTABLE

The Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance defines accountability as “the process of using power responsibly, taking account of, and being held accountable by different stakeholders, and primarily those who are affected by the exercise of such power”. Through this strategy Oxfam will be held accountable for its commitments to racial justice and decolonial partnerships, but will also need to ensure that its accountability processes themselves are devoid of colonial power structures.

This approach to accountability goes beyond the important basics of objective setting, control and oversight, performance management, and feedback. It takes action at a structural level, recognising how colonial power and white supremacy⁹ exist within our systems, policies, practices and mindsets – and understanding the harm that this has caused. We will keep working to understand what systemic racism looks like at Oxfam GB.

We will develop several initiatives to promote greater accountability:

THE DECOLONIAL PARTNERSHIPS ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

To enable Oxfam teams across Middle East, Africa and Asia to monitor and evaluate how Oxfam GB is performing on our commitments to decolonial partnerships, a baseline will be built from the evidence collected from Oxfam teams and progress measured against it.

RACIAL JUSTICE ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTING

To strengthen the existing SpeakUp system to identify and address racialised abuse, harm and harassment. It will include building trust and listening to BIPOC colleagues globally.

THE LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK (LAF)

To monitor progress and measure impact through a non-traditional approach, helping us understand change in a new and complex adaptive system. It includes support to colleagues around the world in setting their own learning plans and reviewing progress towards their own team strategies. This framework will produce a quarterly progress update (including evaluations, programme reports, real time reviews) and a collective annual assessment (using data and case studies).

To offer extra input and to promote greater transparency, we will also establish an external advisory board. This will include independent advisors who are familiar with decolonization principles and practice. They will guide, provoke, and encourage Oxfam to progress with this strategy, compare our progress with the rest of a changing sector, and hold us to account. This board will share their views with Oxfam GB Trustees, staff and partners.

⁹ Oxfam believes that in order to tackle structural racism and coloniality, we need to name the problem. This sometimes means using language that make people understandably uncomfortable, often through misinterpretation of what we mean or because we're highlighting uncomfortable realities that we must all work through. To avoid misinterpretation, there's an explanation of what we mean by these terms in the glossary at the end of this document.

HOW WE'LL KNOW IT'S WORKING

The shift in direction, priorities, and ways of working that this strategy implies will present some new risks and opportunities to Oxfam GB. (See annex 1 below).

These will be regularly monitored as we lean into opportunities for progressing this strategy, approaching risk from a decolonial perspective. Most notably, this strategy is an opportunity for Oxfam to live our values, to bring to life our anti-racist and feminist commitments. It's also an opportunity for us to contribute to a transformed 'aid' sector and a new way of the world that no longer holds historical power structures. There is, of course, a risk that Oxfam will eventually no longer be needed, if donors and others choose to work directly with Southern partners rather than through us. But we are a way from that just yet and, should it happen, we would view that as a success.

In the meantime, we'll develop indicators to help us assess how well this strategy is working, mostly informed by the experience of our colleagues and partners in the Global South. It'll be an ongoing effort, evolving as we implement and learn from the strategy. (More on indicators in annex 3 below).

We'll know that we've succeeded when Oxfam teams and partner organizations in the Global South feel that they have power and control over their work, that we support and enable rather than overpower it, and that we act in true solidarity. Essentially, we'll know this strategy is working when partners choose to work with Oxfam GB, not because of the resources we hold, but because of our whole offer as part of the movement against poverty and inequality.

/// We'll know that we've succeeded when Oxfam teams and partner organizations in the Global South feel that they have power and control over their work... ///

ANNEX 1

OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

Our own Audit and Risk Committee of the Board has started considering how we evolve our risk and compliance perspectives to balance our obligations to various stakeholders, from donors and regulators to our Southern partners.

Below is a starter list of opportunities and risks that this strategy presents. As new opportunities and risks emerge, they will be identified, discussed and recorded. The action plan for this strategy contains a full list of current implementation and operational risks, and the mitigations needed for each – both of which will evolve over time. Those that are judged to merit it will be included in the Corporate Risk Register and regularly monitored by Oxfam GB's Strategic Leadership Team.

OPPORTUNITIES

AN OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE OUR VALUES

This strategy brings to life Oxfam's ambition to become a feminist and anti-racist organization, and to reinforce our integrity. The current context of aid means that there is a real imperative to change and to be seen to be changing. To fail to do so presents some risk of us not honouring our values, and of being seen as outdated, unethical, and becoming obsolete. With this strategy Oxfam would be a front runner among INGOs, as very few others have developed such clear and strong statements of intent on decolonization.

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR TRANSFORMATION

This strategy develops both a conceptual framework and the outline of an approach for Oxfam to become a different organization. This is particularly imperative following the turbulent recent years and would demonstrate bravery in reimagining Oxfam as a bold and transforming organization. This is work that is foundational to implementing our '*Transforming for a Radically Better World*' commitments.¹⁰ It is also in service to the whole Oxfam International confederation, providing a positive example for other Oxfam affiliates and the wider sector.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE PARTNER OF CHOICE

Oxfam GB is already sharing indirect cost recovery with country teams and partners to enable the growth of civil society in countries we work in. But implementing this strategy will make our offer to partners significantly stronger.

¹⁰ https://www.oxfam.org.uk/documents/558/Transforming_for_a_radically_better_world_1.pdf

AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE AN 'EMPLOYER OF CHOICE'

Oxfam GB has the opportunity to increase its appeal to potential candidates by demonstrating that it's responding to today's challenges. It would also demonstrate commitment to providing opportunities for talent and protecting equity for its staff.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO GROW STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH PROGRESSIVE DONORS

An increasing number of both independent philanthropic and government funders are engaging in the Shift the Power movement¹¹. They want to see INGOs transform themselves and take an empowering and supportive approach to partners from the Global South. This strategy is an opportunity to demonstrate that Oxfam is a progressive and values-driven organization, which is taking a thoughtful and robust approach to decolonization. This could also be an opportunity to re-frame the value-add that donors see in INGOs like us – from an emphasis on controls, governance and strategy, towards an emphasis on quality partnerships, genuine nurturing of Southern civil society, and co-created interventions with Southern actors.

RISKS

A RISK THAT WE COMPROMISE OUR ABILITY TO RAISE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT OUR WORK

There is a risk that our existing funding base could be impacted if supporters and donors were to think that Oxfam's controls over partners, and therefore their funds, has weakened, or if their confidence in our due diligence checks of partners was dented. The mitigation for this risk is to develop our decolonized systems and processes thoughtfully, testing our thinking with donors along the way, and working in coalition with like-minded peers to change the whole sector.

A RISK THAT OUR REGULATORS WORRY THAT WE ARE WEAKENING OUR CONTROLS OVER FUNDS

There is some risk that the proposed shifts to our partnership arrangements, and risk and compliance controls, could be perceived by regulators to be less robust than our historical approaches. We will therefore take the considered approaches discussed with the Risk and Audit committee – carefully reviewing each part of our risk and compliance framework, intentionally taking a proportionate risk-based approach, simplifying our legal arrangements as appropriate, and carefully checking that each proposed change complies with the Charity Commission and HMRC.

A RISK THAT WE ARE NO LONGER SEEN AS NEEDED

In many ways, if donors and others choose to work directly with Southern partners rather than through us, this will be considered success and in the spirit of this strategy. In fact, we will be working actively with collaborators in the sector, such as the RINGO project and Bond¹², to develop and encourage decolonial models of funding and create pressure for wider sector change in this direction. This will include more direct funding, lighter or unrestricted funding, trust based and relational funding. It may be that the INGO network of the future is less about being a collector and distributor of funds, and more about connecting and supporting in other ways.

11 <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2022/03/shiftthepower-manifesto-for-change-where-it-started-and-where-we-are-now/>

12 Bond is the network of British Overseas NGOs

ANNEX 2

SAMPLE INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

Developing indicators is an ongoing effort and will evolve as we implement and learn from the strategy.

Some will need to be co-created with colleagues and partners in the Global South, in particular indicators to measure their autonomy. And some will be shared by the whole Oxfam confederation as they refer to overarching Oxfam commitments (such as the aim of redistributing the division of staff and funds from North to South). The accountability initiatives above will create spaces for reflection, learning and adaptation, using qualitative and quantitative data.

An initial set of indicators has been developed and will sit centrally in the action plan as part of the operational architecture of the strategy and will be included in the annual plans of divisions. A final set of indicators and reporting framework will be produced and tested in the first year of implementing this strategy.

A sample set of indicators reflected against the aims described on page 9 above are included below, to give a sense of how we intend to monitor progress under the strategy.

INDICATORS FOR AIM 1: BE A 'PARTNER OF CHOICE' TO COUNTRY TEAMS AND GLOBAL SOUTH CIVIL SOCIETY

1. Increase in proportion of unrestricted funding going to Southern Oxfams (see definition on page 9) and decrease the proportion of expenditure programmed directly by Oxfam GB
2. Increase the volume and quality of funding going to Southern partners
3. Increase the amount of indirect cost recovery that partners can claim, at a rate agreed by donors
4. More examples of Oxfam GB passing opportunities to raise resources and profile onto partner.

INDICATORS FOR AIM 2: DECOLONIZE OUR INTERNAL SYSTEMS, POLICIES, AND PRACTICE

1. Review whether our brand, campaign and influencing strategies and the way we work with other stakeholders are in line with decolonial approaches
2. A new risk framework that better balances our aim of shifting power and resources with the requirements of our regulators and donors
3. A partnership assessment tool and the prototype for reduced compliance and funding practices piloted and lessons shared
4. Decolonial approaches to research, evidence bases and knowledge production.

INDICATORS FOR AIM 3: BE ACCOUNTABLE TO COLLEAGUES AND PARTNERS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

1. Development of an accountability baseline using existing sources and that includes feedback from Southern Oxfams.
2. An accountability mechanism is co-created with Southern Oxfams, focusing on risk management and compliance, as well as decolonial systems, practice, policies and mindsets.
3. Effective systems for dialogue and feedback between Southern teams and Oxfam GB leadership.
4. A Learning and Accountability Framework that provides reflective spaces and data to support continued learning about decolonized partnership.

INDICATORS FOR AIM 4: ACT IN SOLIDARITY WITH CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

1. Improved satisfaction from Southern Oxfams and other partners (see page 9 for definitions) and partners on how well Oxfam GB supports them.
2. Increased proportion of policy and practice publications authored by the Global South.
3. Increased numbers of local partners and project participants who are credited for their contribution to Oxfam's work in our internal and external communications.
4. More instances of Oxfam supporting direct requests made by Southern Oxfams and partners for global influencing and advocacy opportunities.

GLOSSARY

Decolonization is essential for progressing towards racial justice. So, in this paper, we deliberately use anti-racist language which has been specifically developed to name the problem. For some, these terms may be unfamiliar or carry different meanings. So, here's a short glossary to clarify what we mean when we use them.

ANTI-RACISM

Anti-racism is more than being non-racist. Anti-racism recognizes racism has systemic and structural elements, and actively takes steps to combat them.

BIPOC

BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour. We use this term to recognize the international scope of Oxfam's work, and how indigenous communities worldwide are affected by racism and legacies of colonialism. When referring to the UK only, we say 'BPOC'.

COLONIALISM

Colonialism is the domination by one country over another – to gain political control, occupy the land with settlers and exploit it economically. Many people may feel this no longer exists. But the domination over different countries' cultures, languages, religions, and economies still remains.

COLONIALITY

Coloniality refers to the imbalance of power resulting from colonialism. It still infiltrates societies worldwide and is underpinned by the racial hierarchies imposed by colonialism.

DECOLONIZATION

Decolonization is the act of achieving independence from colonialism and undoing the harm it caused. For the purpose of our work in international development, it's an ongoing process of shifting decolonial power back to Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, who are calling for agency over their political and economic structures – as well as culture, society, education, language, and voice.

DECOLONIALITY

Decoloniality is the act of delinking from the colonial matrix of power with a focus on disrupting the legacies of colonialism which remains in mindsets and belief systems and which can show up in everyone regardless of race.

GLOBAL SOUTH & GLOBAL NORTH

Global South & Global North help us to discern majority BIPOC countries from rich, mainly white countries that colonized them. They're imperfect terms due to geography (e.g. Australia's in the Global South), and how they overlook the differences in contexts and cultures. But they're relatively easy for a wide audience to understand, and we lack a better alternative.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality recognizes how various parts of our identity – like race, sex, gender, sexuality, class and ability – overlap to create unique experiences of oppression and privilege. It was initially created to understand how Black women face both racism and sexism. Nowadays, it's applied more widely to also include other aspects of identity on top.

RACIAL JUSTICE

Racial justice is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, with equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. It goes beyond "anti-racism" – it isn't just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems that redistribute racial power.

SHIFTING POWER

Shifting power is about rebalancing power by changing how we see and act in the world, and moving more money, decision-making, and influence to communities and organizations in the Global South. Power is shared unequally in today's global society due to the legacies of colonialism and deeply rooted forms of inequality. Oxfam has a responsibility to not dominate spaces which should be led by partners and civil society.

WHITENESS

Whiteness is a culture that opens doors for white people and excludes Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. It exists worldwide, where white people feel their race is the norm. Whatever our race, it influences how much power we have, how society accepts us, and access to things like jobs, education and political voice.

WHITE GAZE

White gaze assumes that the person reading or viewing something is white and holds whiteness as the standard for everything. If we assume our audiences are white, it means we will cater for and prioritize these views in our communications, overlooking other experiences and cultures.

WHITE SAVIOURISM

White saviourism defines how people want to 'fix' perceived problems in nations mainly populated by Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. It wrongly paints BIPOC as poor, helpless and needy. It puts power in the hands of white people, and assumes they've all the knowledge, experience, and tools. At Oxfam, we recognize how this creates harm and commit to moving from saviourism to solidarity.

WHITE SUPREMACY

White supremacy refers to the deep-seated and, at times, subconscious belief that white people are superior to Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. It exists worldwide and is more than the behaviour of individuals. Instead, it is a system of exploitation and oppression that we're all part of.

We acknowledge that certain terms – like BIPOC, Global South, Global North – can enhance a sense of 'othering', but we're yet to find perfect terms that don't. We also recognize the limits of umbrella terms, and how some language will be interpreted differently depending on the context.

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