

# SEXUAL DIVERSITY AND GENDER IDENTITY POLICY



OXFAM

## A POSITIVE FUTURE

Oxfam's vision is a world in which people can influence decisions that affect their lives, enjoy their rights, and assume their responsibilities as full citizens where all human beings are valued and treated equally. This is central to our work eliminating injustice and poverty.

Sexuality and gender identity is a positive, core part, of being human and experiencing wellbeing and fulfilment. Yet, when diversity of sexuality and gender identity is rendered invisible, or becomes the basis of discrimination, the rights to decisions over bodies, sexualities, identities and intimate consensual relations of one's own choosing are violated. Further, poverty and gender inequalities can become more extreme, and development interventions can be inappropriate or fail to reach LGBTI people altogether, resulting in multiple marginalisation.

## BARRIER TO ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Today there are still 75 countries and 5 entities that criminalize homosexuality. Discrimination, violence and exclusion on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity are a violation of human rights, a barrier to active citizenship and a contributing factor to the perpetuation of poverty.

LGBTI people often have limited access to:



Health care



Education



Employment



Economic opportunities



Justice

## SEXUAL RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

Oxfam affirms the right of all people, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, to:

- seek, receive and impart credible, evidence-based information related to sexuality
- live their sexual orientation and choose their sexual partner or partners
- decide to be sexually active or not
- participate in consensual sex
- pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life
- freedom of gender identity and expression
- live free from violence, including sexual violence
- equality, equal protection of the law and freedom from all forms of discrimination based on sex, sexuality or gender
- participate in civil, economic, social, cultural and political life
- privacy regarding matters of sexuality
- personal autonomy and recognition before the law
- freedom of thought, opinion, expression and association regarding sexuality, gender identity and sexual rights, without limitations from dominant cultural beliefs or political ideology
- health care, including sexual health care for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of all sexually related concerns, problems and disorders
- comprehensive sex education and information necessary to exercise full citizenship and equality in the private, public and political domains
- choose whether or not to marry, found and plan a family, and decide whether or not, how and when, to have children

## OXFAM CALLS ON GOVERNMENTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO:

**Decriminalize all forms of consensual sexual activity between adults**

**Recognize diverse gender identities, including non-binary identities**

**Ensure legislation to prohibit violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity**

**Promote access to sexual health care, mental health support and gender affirming surgery**

**Implement the human right to social protection regardless of sexual or gender identity**



## IN ALL WE DO

Around the globe, Oxfam works to find practical, innovative ways for people to lift themselves out of poverty and thrive. We save lives and help rebuild livelihoods when crisis strikes. And we campaign so that the voices of the poor influence the local and global decisions that affect them. This is all made possible by hard-working staff and volunteers who engage with the public, companies, governments and organizations that generously support Oxfam through a wide variety of channels. Diversity of sexuality and gender identity is core to all of this work.

In the past decade Oxfam has challenged discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. More recently these issues have gained greater attention in development work in the global South. Groups and networks defining and claiming LGBTI identities and rights are building their profiles, as are the efforts to control them both legislatively and socially.

Despite this, there are grounds for optimism. Many countries both in the global South and North have experienced great leaps forward, abolishing laws that criminalized or discriminated against individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Some have gone further, approving legal environments that promote equal rights and actively combat discrimination. Likewise, civil society movements have fought and won tremendous battles, gaining voice and ground in many contexts. In recent years, public opinion has also evolved in many contexts.

LGBTI discrimination constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights. This injustice requires our systematic attention and action. We must demonstrate solidarity with LGBTI individuals, learn from and engage with current initiatives and explore new approaches to overcoming the related problems of stigmatisation, inequality and violence. Oxfam is fully committed to this, especially at the grassroots. It is a reflection of our support for international covenants recognizing that all human rights have equal status, are interdependent and interrelated, and that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

## OXFAM'S COMMITMENT



Assess the potential harms and address factors that may marginalize LGBTI people from our programs, including our own staff attitudes and perceptions



Look for practices in Oxfam's work to protect and promote human rights of LGBTI people, as well as transform underlying factors that cause violence and oppression



Ensure all of our work considers gender and sexuality in terms of diversity, power and privilege, in our analysis, programming, policies and campaigns



Work with local LGBTI civil society to understand local context and how Oxfam's work might either hinder or enable and leverage positive change for LGBTI people



Support civil society organizations and build the capacity of current partners to develop their work so it is more inclusive of sexual rights



Speak out publicly and actively in support of people and groups whose sexual rights are threatened or violated



Operationalize and live our values, reflect our external policies in our internal practices, ensure our workplaces promote and celebrate inclusivity and diversity



Ensure that all staff are made aware of our policies, adequately trained, and are held accountable for integrating them into their work and their workplace

**IT IS NECESSARY TO CHALLENGE DISCRIMINATION, VIOLENCE AND INJUSTICE ON THE GROUNDS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY, AS WELL AS THE POWER IMBALANCES THAT PREVENT LGBTI PEOPLE FROM ENJOYING THEIR RIGHTS.**



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