

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE



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© Oxfam International March 2023. This guide was developed by Helen Wishart in collaboration with a huge number of people from across the Oxfam confederation, and we would like to acknowledge the collective contributions that built this body of work. We would also like to acknowledge the work of the many activists, grassroots organizations, educators, academics and thinkers, particularly those from the global majority, who have been leading much of the work that has informed the creation of this guide. In particular we would like to recognize those from marginalized communities, including Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, LGBTQIA+ people, people with disabilities, and the working class and labour movements, who have been at the forefront of driving political and social change, including in how we think about language. This guide is dedicated to you in solidarity and love.

For further information on the issues raised in this paper, please email policyandpractice@oxfam.org.uk

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The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International under:

ISBN 978-1-78748-761-1 in March 2023.
DOI: 10.21201/2021.7611

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Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK.

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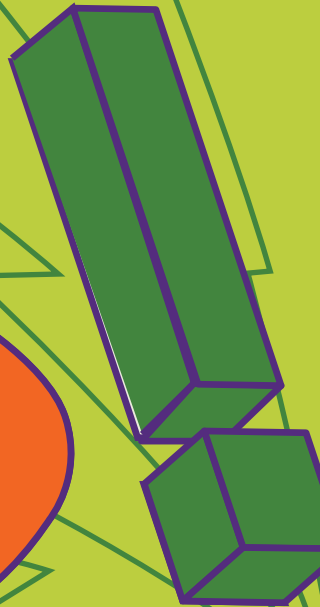
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THE POWER OF LANGUAGE



At Oxfam it is important that the language we use reflects our values and work. Language has the power to reinforce or deconstruct systems of power that maintain poverty, inequality and suffering. Choices in language can empower us to reframe issues, rewrite tired stories, challenge problematic ideas and build a radically better future based on a survivor-centred, intersectional, anti-racist and feminist vision of equality.



BEFORE YOU START

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN TACKLING POVERTY

Oxfam's aim is to prevent and relieve poverty and suffering and to promote human rights, equality and diversity. We cannot end poverty unless we take a truly inclusive approach to tackling the root causes, the systems and structures, that keep people in poverty. An intersectional approach to understanding how people differently experience discrimination and inequality is vital to meeting our mandate. A critical look at the language we use and whether it reinforces or disrupts our analysis of how poverty takes hold is an important part of the work we do.

We must recognize the power that we hold as Oxfam with humility, and ensure that when we speak or write about our work, the words that we use are a reflection of the equal world that we are working in solidarity with others to create. This means being self-aware in the way that we talk about intersectional power issues related to gender, race, sexuality, inequality and disability, and communicating about people of different identities or groups that may experience discrimination.

At the very least, we must ensure that our language does not imply concepts that are patronizing or reinforce stereotypes about the people we work with. At best, we can use language to actively challenge structures that marginalize people or groups in order to support them to exercise their rights.

When working with groups that have experienced discrimination, we should always be advised by them on how they wish to be

referred to. We also have to communicate in a way that engages with the audiences we aim to reach, to create together a shared vision that centres equality, inclusion and accountability in our work to end poverty.

The language guide is divided into thematic sections, though many of the issues discussed intersect and some terms may be relevant to several categories. The guide is based on a set of Feminist Principles for Language Use, which you can find below. It gives examples of how you can put these principles into practice in your writing and in day-to-day conversation. It also includes phrases and concepts which we may not use much at the moment in our work and writing but which are important to understand in order to recognize and challenge intersecting power issues in our work.

It is also important to consider these principles in relation to sourcing and selection of images. See Oxfam's [Guidelines](#).

LIMITATIONS

While we hope this resource will be useful to people working in the sector, and beyond, we acknowledge that it has limitations. Firstly, we recognize that there are many radical and grassroots organizations and activists in the global majority that have been leading work on racial justice and decolonization for a long time. Oxfam is learning from these movements, and is in a process of recognition of the colonial history and behaviours of the ‘international development’ sector, with a view to working towards meaningful decolonization of our work, and a shifting of power from the global minority to the majority.

We are also working towards embracing an intersectional feminist and anti-racist approach to gender justice that addresses the erasure of the voices and stories of women, racialized groups, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ people and others. In this we are led by the work of specialist organizations and activists, whom we do not intend to replace or take space from, but seek support and share platforms and power with in solidarity.

We further recognize that this guide has its origin in English, the language of a colonizing nation. We acknowledge the Anglo-supremacy of the sector as part of its coloniality. This guide aims to support people who have to work and communicate in the English language as part of this colonial legacy. However, we recognize that the dominance of English is one of the key issues that must be addressed in order to decolonise our ways of working and shift power.

We have tried to make the guide accessible, but recognize that there are places where the language conveys complex ideas or is quite technical, which may alienate some readers.

While it was produced in collaboration with dozens of people across our global confederation, its production in a global minority country means that there is likely to be implicit bias. There are no doubt issues, words or phrases that should have been included and have been missed. We humbly accept that this will never be a comprehensive document,

and while we have extensively researched and consulted with relevant groups and individuals in its production, we will never be able to represent everybody, and this guidance will never really be ‘complete’.

Please consider it a work in progress, and a contribution at a particular moment in time to the work of decolonization and efforts to foster diversity and inclusion in the sector. As such, we commit to regularly reviewing and updating the guide as we continue to learn and understand more, and to reflect the ongoing evolution of the work of social justice movements. If you have any feedback or suggestions, please email policyandpractice@oxfam.org.uk.

HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

Entries include the definitions of words or phrases. Below this, the ? symbol indicates why we would use that word or phrase in our work. Where applicable, the X symbol identifies words or phrases we should be avoiding.

You can either browse by issue, using the linked contents listed earlier in this document, or use the 'search' function to look for a specific word or phrase.

Please note that this is just a guideline for things to think about in your choice of language and is not intended as a prescriptive document. Always be guided by what is most appropriate in your context and the advice of the people you are writing about or a policy specialist in your thematic area. As language develops over time, the guide will necessarily be updated to reflect changes in society and justice movements.

TRIGGER WARNING

Please note that since this guide includes words and phrases that should be avoided, you may come across some that you consider discriminatory or that have been used historically to oppress certain people or groups. These may cause distress to people who have experienced discrimination on the basis of their identity. Given the nature of this guide, we understand that many of the issues it discusses are personal and emotive for many people. While naming oppressions is necessary to deconstruct them, we recognize that this can take a toll on those directly affected. Please take care in the reading of the guide and prioritize your wellbeing.

A NOTE ON DISCOMFORT

Social change by its very nature is disruptive. The comfort of the status quo must be disrupted in order to dismantle oppressive structures and create pathways to equality. As you read this guide, you may experience discomfort. For example, many people don't personally associate with the concept of having privilege, nor recognize the relative advantages they may be afforded in society compared to others, particularly if they have themselves struggled or feel they have fully earned that privilege. This alternative view of privilege can be challenging to process, but is necessary to understand how power works within and beyond our work.

Further, the guide directly addresses issues of racism and colonialism that have been part of 'international development' since its inception. For people who have dedicated their life to social change, it can be distressing to acknowledge that our approach to this work may have reinforced power structures that are at odds with our values.

However, we must face these challenges and embrace discomfort to move forward and change the way that we work for the better. There is a distinction between being uncomfortable and being unsafe; inequality in power is at the heart of this difference. Only by naming, understanding and tackling the root causes of inequality and poverty that are endemic in our culture can we create genuine change and work towards real equality.

FEMINIST PRINCIPLES FOR LANGUAGE USE



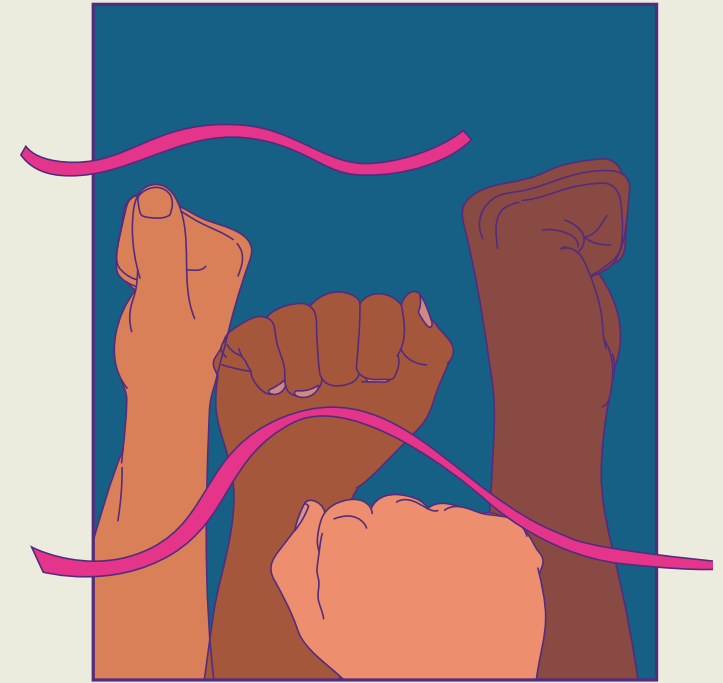
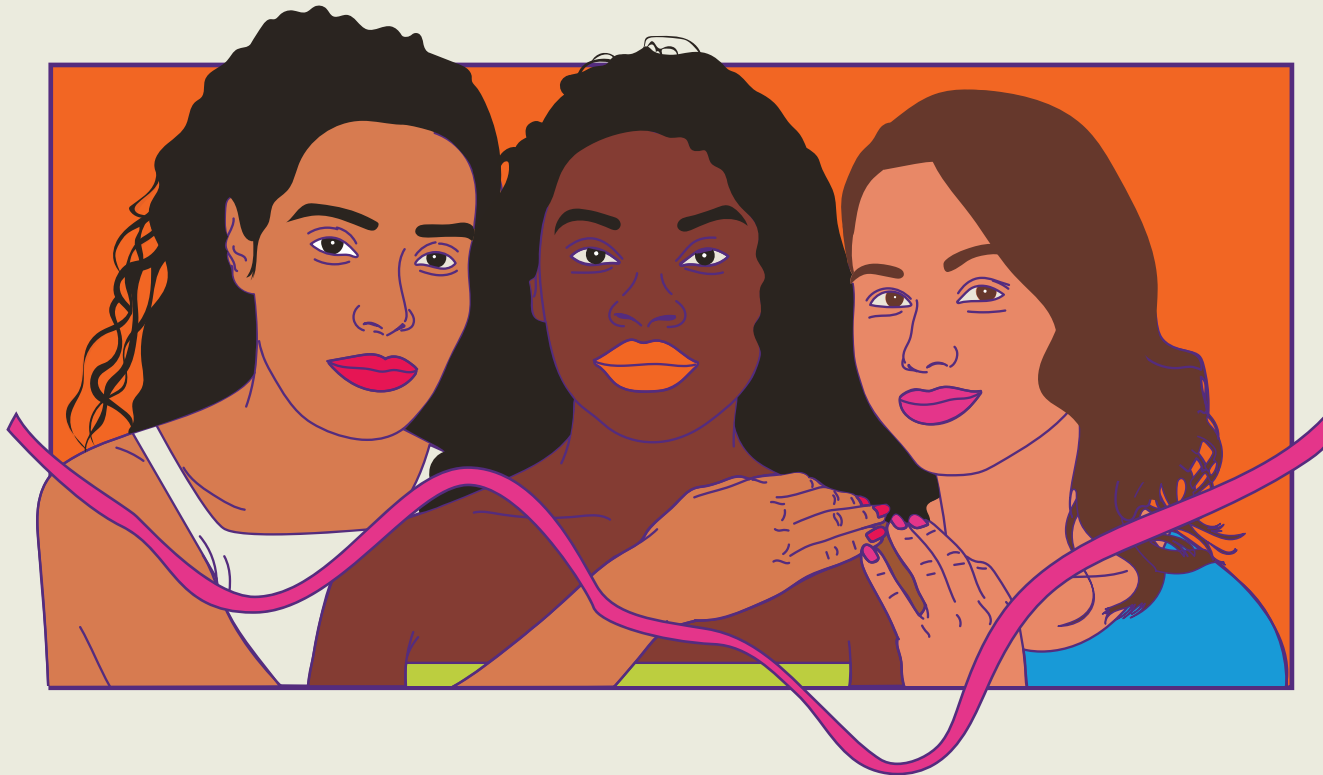
These principles and language guidelines are designed to prompt thought when using language. They are not set rules and should not be viewed as restrictions. They are intended to complement existing messaging frameworks and positionings. We recognize that language is context- and audience-specific, and shifts between time and place; we would encourage you to think about what works best for your purpose.

We also encourage you to use your judgement in applying the principles. We hope these principles and language guidelines will help you to choose words which align with your values and with feminist principles which we are committed to upholding, whatever the context.

DIVERSITY

We will be specific in our language. We won't make sweeping statements which categorize people or communities according to

characteristics defined by others; instead, we will be led by how the people in question prefer to be referred to.



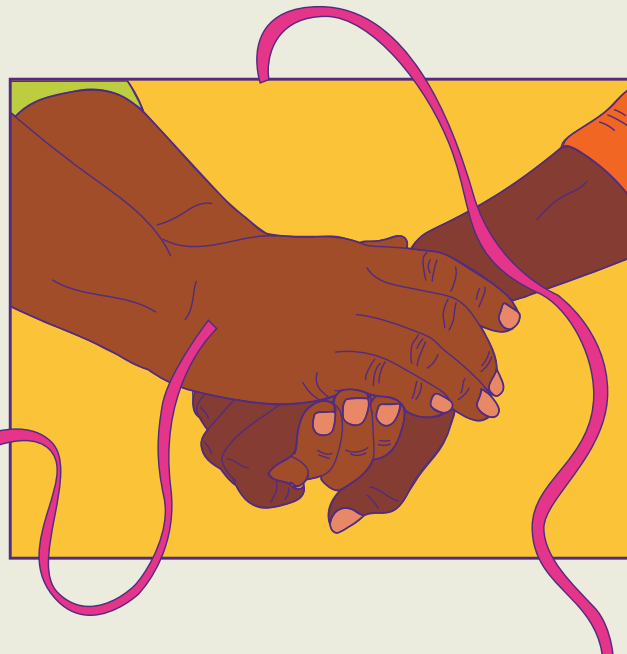
POWER SHARING

We will use language to challenge and shift perceptions. We won't use language that reinforces the norms or power structures that drive poverty and suffering which we are trying to disrupt.



SAFETY

We will take care to ensure that our language does not put people at risk or cause harm, and always supports the safety of people and communities affected by discrimination.



NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

We will be informed by how people wish to be referred to, taking our lead from communities themselves or organizations which represent them, recognizing that they may not describe themselves in homogenous ways.



CARE & SOLIDARITY

We will use straightforward language, finding simple alternatives which adhere to these principles where possible and which are easy to translate. We will avoid jargon that obscures or alienates. Where we use phrasing that is less well understood, we will include an explanation.

INCLUSION AND BELONGING

We will be inclusive through our use of language, ever mindful of those we risk excluding through our words and phrases, explicitly or implicitly. We will speak clearly and sensitively when discussing language with others, even if we disagree, recognizing the diversity of personal meanings of language people may hold and their lived realities.



PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

We will be courageous and clear in naming structural oppressions and who is affected by them, even when these make us uncomfortable and are unpopular in public discourse. We recognize that challenging economic inequality, patriarchy, sexism, racism and colonialism, and promoting feminism and racial justice, are vital to ending poverty.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Who am I including, and who am I excluding through the use of this language?

Am I inadvertently ignoring or erasing individuals or groups who experience discrimination by not understanding the impacts of my language?

Am I reinforcing the norms that I wish to disrupt through this language, or challenging those norms and assumptions?

Am I over-generalizing and making assumptions about what my audience will and won't understand?

Am I striving to instill a sense of belonging through my communications, or inadvertently isolating individuals or groups by not understanding the impacts of my language?

Am I making conscious choices about the language I use and applying feminist and anti-racist principles, or am I falling into old habits?

DISABILITY, PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH



Oxfam's work to support people living in poverty must integrate an informed understanding of the way that people with disabilities, or other physical or mental health issues, are disproportionately affected by inequality.

One in six people in low-income countries live with a disability, including in many of the countries in which Oxfam works. People with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty and to experience other forms of discrimination and violence than non-disabled people. They are more likely to have difficulty accessing education and employment when institutions are not set up to support their needs. In humanitarian emergencies, people with disabilities are also disproportionately affected and face greater barriers in accessing humanitarian assistance, protection and support.

Oxfam is working to improve inclusion in our work, including by designing programmes that anticipate the needs of people with disabilities, and to increase accountability in our reporting mechanisms.¹ We are also committed to ensuring equality in our workplace. This section includes words and phrases informed by people with disabilities and the specialist organizations that support them. We hope that it provides useful guidance on how to write about disability in a way that is positive and accurate, and centres the dignity and inclusion of those we are writing about.



✓ ABLEISM

i Discrimination in favour of non-disabled people. 'The practices and dominant attitudes in society that exclude, devalue and limit the potential of people with disabilities.'²

? WHY

'An ableist society is one that treats non-disabled individuals as the standard of 'normal living', which results in public and private places and services, education and social work that are built to serve only non-disabled people, thereby creating barriers for people with disabilities.'³

Not having a disability is not generally acknowledged as a privilege but is frequently assumed to be a norm. The people we work with include people with disabilities who will be differently and disproportionately affected by the issues we work on. We must work to understand and support the needs of all people, and actively respond to address the needs of people with disabilities.

✓ IS AFFECTED BY

i To describe a person affected by a particular disability without defining them by their health issue.

? WHY

The phrase 'is affected by' does not define a person by a health issue and avoids negative connotations.

✗ WE AVOID

is afflicted with, suffers from, is a victim of

✓ MOBILITY IMPAIRED, PERSON WITH A MOBILITY/PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT

i To describe a person affected by a particular disability without defining them by their particular health issue.

? WHY

Not all people with mobility issues use wheelchairs. The preferred phrases are technically accurate and avoid negative connotations.

✗ WE AVOID

wheelchair-bound, crippled

✓ **NON-DISABLED**

i A person who does not have a disability.

? **WHY**

Non-disabled is a factual and neutral term. 'Normal' or 'healthy' implies that people with disabilities are abnormal or unhealthy. 'Able bodied' implies people with disabilities are not able to do things.

✗ **WE AVOID**

normal, healthy, able-bodied

✓ **PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV, PEOPLE LIVING WITH AIDS, PERSON LIVING WITH A CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITION**

i To describe a person living with a particular health condition.

? **WHY**

The preferred phrases do not define a person by a health issue and avoid negative connotations that imply that a person living with a health condition has no, or limited, quality of life.

✗ **WE AVOID**

AIDS victim, MS sufferer

✓ **PEOPLE OVER/UNDER X, ELDERLY PEOPLE, OLDER PEOPLE, ELDERS, YOUNG PEOPLE**

i To describe people of a particular age group.

? **WHY**

Write about older people in a way that affords respect and dignity, and avoid phrases which are homogenizing or patronising. The same goes for writing about young people.

✗ **WE AVOID**

the elderly, seniors, youth

✓ PEOPLE WHO HAVE PARTICULAR REQUIREMENTS, PEOPLE WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC ACCOMMODATIONS

i People who may have requirements to support them with a disability.

? WHY
Many people consider the term 'special needs' offensive because of the social stigma associated with this phrase.⁴ Use more neutral terms.

✗ WE AVOID
people who have special needs

✓ PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY/DISABILITIES

i To describe a person affected by a particular disability/disabilities, without defining them by their particular health issue.

? WHY
'People with a disability/disabilities' is more respectful as a term as it places the emphasis on the individual, as opposed to defining that person by their disability or using the acronym 'PWD' (people/person(s) with disabilities), which is the language used in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It is important to respect how individual people with disabilities prefer to be referred to. If you are unsure what term to use, ask. Depending on the place/community/person, 'people who are disabled' and 'people who are differently-abled' are also acceptable terms. If in doubt, check with disability organizations in the area/country/region that you are working in.

✗ WE AVOID
the disabled, disabled people, the handicapped

✓ PEOPLE WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT, HARD OF HEARING PERSON, DEAF PERSON

i To describe a person affected by hearing loss, recognizing that there are different degrees of impairment.

? WHY
The word 'deaf' describes anyone who has a severe hearing problem. Sometimes 'Deaf' is capitalized to refer to people who have been deaf their whole lives, and who use sign language as a first language. The Deaf community is strong and has a culture and sense of identity.⁵

✗ WE AVOID
Deaf/deaf

✓ PEOPLE LIVING WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

E.G. PEOPLE LIVING WITH OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD), BIPOLAR DISORDER, ANOREXIA NERVOSA

i To describe a person affected by clinically defined mental health issues, and to avoid conflating day-to-day behaviours with diagnosed illnesses.

? WHY

We should be respectful and sensitive when using language around mental health, and avoid words and phrases that imply or exacerbate stigmatization of people living with mental health issues. By describing people as 'living with' an illness we avoid defining them solely by their health issues. Where possible, we should be specific in naming disorders.

✗ WE AVOID

mental, mental patient, psychotic, OCD, manic depressive

✓ PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT, VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSON, BLIND PERSON, BLIND PEOPLE

i To describe a person affected by sight loss, recognizing that there are different degrees of impairment. 'Blind person' refers to someone with total sight loss.

? WHY

Use descriptions that do not define a person by a health issue and avoid negative connotations and homogenization of all people living with visual impairment.

✗ WE AVOID

the blind

✓ PERSON WHO IS NEURODIVERSE/ NEURODIVERGENT/ NEUROATYPICAL

i To describe somebody whose brain and cognition functions differently from what is considered 'typical'.

? WHY

This term recognizes that brains do not all function in the same way. It includes people who autistic, those with ADHD, and people with dyslexia. It avoids negative stereotypes and can be used to highlight the different strengths neurodiversity offers.⁶

✓ **PERSON WITH SHORT STATURE, PERSON WITH RESTRICTED GROWTH**

i To describe a person with short stature or dwarfism

? WHY
The preferred terms are considered to be respectful.

✓ **IN SOLIDARITY WITH**

i Being in unity with a common cause

? WHY
Acting 'in solidarity with' is an alternative to 'standing with', which avoids potentially alienating people who are unable to stand. It is a more inclusive phrase to demonstrate a common cause or interest.

✗ WE AVOID
standing with

✓ **TOOK THEIR OWN LIFE, ENDED THEIR OWN LIFE, DEATH BY SUICIDE, COMPLETED SUICIDE, ATTEMPTED SUICIDE**

i To describe a situation where a person ends their own life.

? WHY
The phrase 'committed suicide' derives from this act historically being criminalized and therefore implies wrongdoing.

✗ WE AVOID
committed suicide,
unsuccessful suicide

GENDER JUSTICE, SEXUAL DIVERSITY & WOMEN'S RIGHTS



Oxfam's commitment to gender justice is at the heart of our work to overcome inequality. Gender justice is understood as full equality between women and men (including trans men and women) as well as non-binary people.

Gender justice is crucial to achieving our mandate to end poverty, since women form the majority of those living in poverty with fewer resources and less power and influence compared to men. Women also experience discrimination that prevents them from exercising their human rights, including gender-based violence and lack of access to basic necessities such as adequate healthcare, education, or dignified and fairly paid work. Transgender people are affected by many of the same systemic issues and are also more likely to live in poverty, though their experiences of discrimination and inequality can be different. For this reason, we include people of all genders in our commitment to gender justice, because equality isn't equality if it's not for everyone.


Our approach to gender justice is also centred in intersectional feminism; it takes into account the way that different social and political identities can create different experiences of gendered oppression, for example, race, faith, class, disability, sexuality, trans status, age etc. Intersectionality is a concept born from Black feminist theory⁷ and, as such, any intersectional analysis must centre race and gender in its understanding of power. This section provides guidance on how to talk about gender-based inequality issues, and is grouped into the following sub-sections: Gender Norms and Inequality, LGBTQIA+ Rights and Inclusion, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights, and Sexual Violence.



1 GENDER NORMS AND INEQUALITY

Gender norms are the culturally held ideals and expectations of behaviour and the different roles of men and women in society. Gender norms are important to our understanding of inequality because in every country in the world, they lead to the devaluing of women; whether through women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work, unequal access to education, being paid less for the same work as men, forced marriage or many other issues.

These norms can also be harmful to men, creating unrealistic ideals of masculinity that can lead to conflict and violence, and sometimes preventing them from being more involved as fathers, for example. The norms also erase the existence of non-binary and gender-fluid people, as well as people of other genders as differently expressed in the different contexts and cultures in which we work. Oxfam works with partners to support the people we work with in striving towards a more gender-equal world in which all people can exercise their rights. This section covers some key terminology around gender norms.



✓ ANDROCENTRISM

i 'Androcentrism is the practice, conscious or otherwise, of placing a masculine point of view at the centre of one's world view, culture and history, thereby culturally marginalizing femininity.'⁸

? WHY

We take an actively feminist approach that is inclusive of all genders. Avoiding androcentric narratives is a vital part of this. This word is not in common usage, so if you introduce it in your writing it is advisable to define it at first use.



✓ CARE WORKLOAD, HEAVY AND UNEQUAL CARE WORK

i Work – usually unpaid – to ‘care’ for members of a family or otherwise support people and communities, e.g. cleaning, making food, looking after relatives etc.

✗ WE AVOID

care burden, the burden of care

? WHY

The term ‘burden’ undermines the value and importance of care work and implies that it only needs to be reduced and minimized, when in fact we want more and better-quality care. We value the contribution of unpaid and paid care work to society and the economy. Feminist economists use the term ‘care workload’ – talking about a heavy or difficult care workload better expresses the impact of care on women’s lives without the connotations of ‘burden’.

✓ CLIMATE GENDER JUSTICE

i An understanding of how the climate crisis affects women differently to men.

? WHY

Climate gender justice⁹ recognizes how gender and climate intersect, while shifting the narrative from women as vulnerable and victims of the climate crisis to agents capable of contributing to solutions. It recognizes that women have a crucial role to play in climate solutions, mitigation and adaptation because of their lived experiences and knowledge. Climate gender justice creates space for women’s equal and full participation at all decision-making tables, at all levels, from development to implementation to evaluation. There cannot be climate justice without gender justice.

✓ DIGNIFIED WORK

i Work that enables workers to be respected as human beings, not treated as a means of production, and that rejects the commodification of work.

? WHY

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines decent work as ‘productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity’.¹⁰ The term decent work should ideally only be used when referring to the ILO’s decent work agenda; otherwise, use ‘dignified work’.

✗ WE AVOID

decent work



✓ DOMESTIC WORKERS

i A person who works in the home of another.

? WHY

‘Domestic servant’ reinforces the norm that this underpaid care work is not dignified work and domestic workers are servants rather than workers with rights.

✗ WE AVOID

domestic servant

✓ FORCED MARRIAGE

i When a person is made to marry against their will, including marriage below the age of consent.

? WHY

Forced marriage is a violation of human rights and an important issue in our gender justice work. Do not use the term ‘child marriage’ as it is never legitimate for a child to marry. Marriage below the age of consent is always forced marriage.

✗ WE AVOID

child marriage, early marriage

✓ GENDER

i Gender can be understood as the social and cultural construction of norms and behaviours attributed to people differently on the basis of their sex assigned at birth.

Gender can also be understood as an identity. A person’s innate sense of their own gender may or may not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth, for example, trans men and women and non-binary people, and people of other genders as differently expressed in the different contexts and cultures in which we work.

? WHY

It is important to be specific in your writing about whether you are referring to gender or sex, and to understand the difference between these terms. If you are unsure which should be used, seek advice from a gender specialist.



✓ GENDER JUSTICE IN CLIMATE RESILIENCE

i An understanding of how integrating gender justice is crucial to climate resilience.

? WHY

Gender-based inequality is one of the main barriers to achieving resilience for communities or societies. Gender inequality limits the way women and girls, men and boys, and people of different genders are able to respond to and manage change. Gender justice plays a central role in achieving resilient development – especially in climate resilience. Climate resilience centred on gender justice integrates a gender dimension and gender analysis to approaches and solutions. This helps to achieve resilient development and reflect the differing gendered inequalities.^{11,12}

✓ HUMAN BEINGS, HUMANKIND

i All humans as a species.

? WHY

‘Mankind’ has an inherent association with maleness.

✗ WE AVOID

mankind

✓ INSTRUMENTALISM

i Undertaking an activity for a practical purpose or end goal, rather than for its own intrinsic value.

? WHY

As an example, framing work towards women’s economic justice through the lens that it will lead to wider economic growth is often presented to the private sector as the ‘business case’ for undertaking it. However, this risks undermining women’s agency and the social justice approach. It is better to frame women’s economic justice and sustainable business practices as mutually supportive, rather than that they will definitively lead to business profitability or that this is the primary goal.



✓ MISOGYNY

i The hatred of and prejudice against women.

? WHY

Prejudice against women has been assumed as a cultural norm on a global scale throughout history but often not been recognized. In our work on women's rights we seek to end misogyny and fight for gender justice and equality for all.

✓ PAID LABOUR, PAID LABOUR FORCE

i Members of an organization or country who are paid to work, considered collectively.

? WHY

Talking about the 'labour force', particularly with regards to 'getting women into the labour force', implies that paid work is the only work with value. Care work is generally unpaid but adds huge value to society and the economy. It is better to differentiate between paid work and unpaid work. Care workers are still part of the labour force. However, it is also important to recognize that there is an implied assumption that the paid labour force refers to the formal sector, ignoring the informal sector where the majority of workers are women.

✗ WE AVOID

labour force

✓ PARTNER/SPOUSE, (CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE TERM WITH THE SAME MEANING)/ HUSBAND AND WIFE, IF APPROPRIATE

i A significant partnership relationship.

? WHY

Unless it is necessary to specify a gendered term that implies marriage in a traditional sense, it may be preferable to use a more neutral term such as 'partner' which is inclusive of all significant relationships.



✓ PATRIARCHY

i Patriarchal systems are built around male privilege and dominant masculinities that perpetuate sexist and hierarchical power relationships. They legitimize the discrimination against and exclusion of women and gender non-conforming people through harmful social norms, policies and institutions.

? WHY

‘Challenging patriarchal systems effectively means fighting poverty and injustice by dismantling intersecting systems of oppression and exploitation such as colonialism, racism, xenophobia, and homo- and transphobia, that further marginalize those who are already vulnerable’¹³ (Oxfam Global Strategic Framework 2020-30).

✓ PEOPLE

i Human beings considered collectively. If you are using the term ‘people’, please make it clear who you are referring to, to be as inclusive as possible.

? WHY

‘People’ is a neutral term that does not refer to women, men or non-binary people specifically, and is therefore inclusive of all human identities. We often use the phrase ‘people we work with’, since we work with people of all genders.

However, it has been found that in the context of a world based on patriarchal systems, ‘people’ is often misunderstood as only referring to men. See the ‘women, men, girls, boys’ note for more advice. If you are going to use the phrase ‘people’ in your writing, please make it clear early in the paper that you are referring to people of all genders, unless this is not the case. If you are writing about specific groups of people, e.g. participants in a women’s rights project, it obviously may be more appropriate to use ‘women’ or more specific gendered terms. Use what works in your context.

✓ SEXISM

i Prejudice, stereotyping or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex.

? WHY

Sexism is a form of prejudice that means that women and girls disproportionately experience the injustice of poverty and are less able to exercise their rights. It also affects the rights and experiences of men. Challenging sexism is therefore fundamental to Oxfam’s work.



✓ SEX WORKER, SEX WORK, WOMEN/PEOPLE WHO SELL SEX (OR SEXUAL SERVICES), MEN/PEOPLE WHO BUY SEX

i A person who works in the sex industry, e.g. receives money or goods in exchange for sexual services.

? WHY

In rights-based campaigns run by people who work in the sex industry they describe themselves as 'sex workers' and their work as 'sex work'. These terms are descriptive and afford respect and dignity to those who engage in this work, and avoid the negative or discriminatory implications of other phrases. These phrases are preferred as part of the movement to respect the rights of people who engage in sex work.

✗ WE AVOID

prostitute, prostitution, use of prostitutes, use of sex workers

✓ SOCIAL NORMS, SOCIAL BELIEFS, COLLECTIVE BELIEFS

i Social norms are collective beliefs about typical and appropriate behaviour that are held by a group of people and often enforced by social sanctions/rewards. An example is the belief that care work is women's work and that women have a duty to provide it.

? WHY

It is important that when we are referring to collective belief systems we do not confuse them with personal attitudes or actual behaviours. If you are writing about attitudes or behaviours that are rooted in social norms, it is best to be clear about this and acknowledge the historical and cultural context.

✗ WE AVOID

attitudes, behaviours

✓ SPOKESPERSON

i A person speaking on behalf of an organization or community.

? WHY

A spokesperson could be of any gender. We should avoid language that implies that men are the default human.

✗ WE AVOID

spokesman



✓ WOMEN AND GIRLS LIVING IN POVERTY

i Women and girls whose economic situation means that they are experiencing poverty.

? WHY

Talking about 'poor women/girls' is patronizing and implies that being poor is an inherent characteristic of who they are, rather than the situation that they are in. It also implies that women and girls who live in poverty are a homogenous group and primarily characterized by their economic situation.

✗ WE AVOID

poor women and girls

✓ WOMEN, MEN, GIRLS, BOYS

? WHY

'Women and children' reaffirms the patriarchal view that women are as helpless as children, neglecting women's actual and potential roles. It wrongly suggests that men are not in need of protection and that women have no agency or capacity to act. Use phrases that do not categorize women and children in the same group, and (depending on the context) be specific about who you are talking about. Where appropriate, acknowledge that men are or can be victims as well (particularly of indiscriminate violence in situations of war). Please see also the note on inclusion of gender non-binary people in the 'people' section.

✗ WE AVOID

women and children, ladies

✓ WOMEN'S ECONOMIC JUSTICE

i This term recognizes that the right of women to participate in, and benefit from, the economy is a core concept of justice. Governments, the private sector, civil society and individuals therefore have a responsibility to address the structural barriers which deny women economic justice.

? WHY

The term 'women's economic empowerment' risks putting the onus on women to change themselves in order to fit into the existing economic system, even though it inherently discriminates against them.

✗ WE AVOID

women's economic empowerment/
WEE



✓ WORKERS

? WHY

An association with maleness is inherent in 'workmen'.

✗ WE AVOID

workmen

✓ WORKFORCE, HUMAN EFFORT

? WHY

An association with maleness is inherent in 'manpower'.

✗ WE AVOID

manpower



2 LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS AND INCLUSION

According to our Sexual Diversity and Gender Identity (SDGI) Rights Policy, Oxfam affirms the rights of LGBTQIA+ people and understands issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, queer, intersex and asexual people as important to our work towards equality. Globally, LGBTQIA+ people are more likely to live in poverty, experience homelessness and be discriminated against in a way that prevents them from exercising basic human rights such as access to healthcare, education, employment and housing. LGBTQIA+ people are also more likely to experience sexual violence¹⁴ as well as hate crime on the basis of their identity.

While gender and sexuality are different things, because ideas around gender and sexuality are so entwined in societies and cultures, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia can be understood as forms of gender-based violence.¹⁵ Integration of LGBTQIA+ rights is therefore essential to an intersectional understanding of gender justice. This section covers key definitions of LGBTQIA+ identities and rights issues, with guidance on how to write about this topic that is informed by LGBTQIA+ people and specialist organizations.

✓ ASEXUAL, ACE

i Asexual is an umbrella term used to describe people who exist within the asexual spectrum. An asexual person is a person of any gender or sexual orientation who does not experience sexual attraction.¹⁶ Ace is an abbreviation of 'asexual' that some people use to describe themselves.

? WHY

Awareness of asexuality has previously been low, but asexual people are gaining more recognition within LGBTQIA+ movements. When advocating for equality, inclusion and human rights, we should include everyone that falls within the LGBTQIA+ spectrum and recognize the different needs, identities and discriminations faced by different people.



✓ AFAB, AMAB

i Acronyms meaning 'assigned female/male at birth'.

? WHY

No one, whether cisgender or transgender, gets to choose what sex they're assigned at birth. This term is preferred to 'biological male/female', 'male/female bodied', 'natal male/female', and 'born male/female', which are inaccurate and do not respect the identity of transgender people.

✗ WE AVOID

biological male/female, male/female bodied', 'natal male/female' and born male/female

✓ BIPHOBIA

i Biphobia is aversion toward bisexuality and toward bisexual people as a social group or as individuals by monosexual people, i.e. heterosexual, gay and lesbian people. It can take the form of denial that bisexuality is a genuine sexual orientation, negative stereotypes about people who are bisexual, or social exclusion. Bisexual people also experience higher levels of sexual violence compared to straight, gay and lesbian people.¹⁷

? WHY

Bisexual erasure is part of heteronormative culture (that assumes that all people are heterosexual) but is also commonly experienced in work on LGBTQIA+ rights. When advocating for equality, inclusion and human rights, we should include everyone that falls within the LGBTQIA+ spectrum and recognize the different needs, identities and discriminations faced by different people.

✓ CISGENDER, CIS

i A person whose sense of gender identity correlates with the sex that they were assigned at birth.

? WHY

Previously there was no recognition that concurrence of sex and gender roles is anything other than the 'norm'. 'Cis' or 'cisgender' is a term to describe people whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth. If used, this term should be framed in the context of power. As this is a relatively new word which is less known by many people, it may be useful to include a box or footnote to explain what it means and why it is being used. It is good to think about inclusion when talking about gender, and understand that we are not all the same and experience discrimination differently. If there is no language to describe a person whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth, then this is assumed to be 'normal', the implications of which contribute to the 'othering' and marginalization of transgender people. For this reason, recognizing this definition is an act of solidarity with trans people, who experience extreme and often violent discrimination around the world.

✓ CIS-NORMATIVE, CIS-NORMATIVITY

i The practices and institutions that legitimize and privilege those who are comfortable in the gender associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

? WHY

Previously there was no recognition that concurrence of sex and gender identity can be considered a privilege. This norm disadvantages and marginalizes people whose gender identity and expression do not meet social expectations. We need to respect the realities of all people and be aware of forms of structural discrimination, including against trans people.

✓ DEADNAMING

i Calling someone by their birth name after they have changed their name. This term is generally associated with trans people who have changed their name as part of their transition.

? WHY

It is important to respect the right to self-determination of transgender people, and to refer to people by the name that they have chosen. While deadnaming is often accidental, it is sometimes done deliberately to cause harm and stress to transgender people. At Oxfam, we consider the rights of transgender people to be human rights, including the right to self-determination.

✗ WE AVOID

The name by which someone may have been known at birth or in an earlier part of their life but no longer wish to use or be associated with.

✓ GAY, LESBIAN, HOMOSEXUAL

i Someone who experiences romantic and/or sexual attraction to people of the same sex or gender.

? WHY

'Gay' is colloquial and can refer to homosexual men and women, though many women prefer to identify with the term 'lesbian'. Some non-binary people also identify as homosexual. Homosexual is a more technical term. We should be mindful of avoiding a heteronormative approach to our work and remember to take into consideration the way that homosexual and bisexual people can experience the issues we work on in different ways to heterosexual people, and may experience additional hardship as a result of discrimination on the basis of their sexuality. Oxfam has a Sexual Diversity and Gender Identity (SDGI) Rights Policy, which prohibits discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people within our organization.¹⁸



✓ GENDER NON-CONFORMING PEOPLE (GNC)

i People who do not conform to the social norms associated with the gender that correlates with their sex assigned at birth.

? WHY

Labelling people as ‘minorities’ cements their position as an ‘other’ within a power structure and implies vulnerability. The description ‘gender non-conforming’ places the emphasis on the system rather than the individual and is more inclusive of a broader range of expressions of non-conformity with gendered social norms. This term can be considered vague, however, and if you are referring to trans people in a way that is intended to be inclusive, it may be better to be more specific.

✗ WE AVOID

gender minorities

✓ HETERONORMATIVE, HETERONORMATIVITY

i Cultural and social practices which support the notion that heterosexuality is the only legitimate sexual orientation. These terms refer to the positioning of heterosexuality as the only way of being ‘normal’ and as a source of social reward.

? WHY

Previously there was no terminology to reflect that non-heterosexual orientations existed or that global systems are based on the assumption of heterosexuality.

In order to achieve real equality, we must fight discrimination in all its forms. If we do not actively include people who experience discrimination, they will necessarily be left out and left behind. To be truly inclusive, we must acknowledge power structures including heteronormativity, which is highly connected to patriarchal norms and gendered expectations. This term may not be familiar to many people so if you are using it in your writing it could be advisable to define it in the first instance.

✓ HOMOPHOBIA

i The fear or hatred of people who are attracted to people of the same gender.

? WHY

Homophobia is a form of discrimination and is fundamentally at odds with work towards creating a more equal world. We must be aware of and explicitly consider how homophobic discrimination may intersect with our work and how it affects those we support.



✓ INTERSEX

i A term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female. Intersex people may identify as male, female or non-binary.¹⁹

? WHY

Awareness of intersex people is low, even though intersex people are thought to make up 1.7% of the global population.²⁰ When making statements about sex, we should be aware of making binary assumptions about biological attributes.

✓ LGBTQIA+

i An acronym that indicates the spectrum of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual + other people whose identities are not heterosexual and cisgender.

? WHY

There are various versions of this acronym that include different letters to represent different groups. It is important to note that some people consider the + (to indicate others not explicitly covered in this acronym) to be insufficient. There are differing views, depending on context. In general, the 'Q' for queer indicates those who consider themselves 'gender queer' or 'sexually queer', although you may prefer to use different acronyms depending on your context. For example, it may be appropriate/necessary to include '2S', meaning 'two-spirit', in North America, where this term has historically been used in Indigenous culture. If in doubt, refer to those with specialist knowledge in your context.

Please note that we never use the acronym without the 'T' for transgender, since this has connotations of anti-trans movements that seek to erase transgender people from the LGBTQIA+ community. As a trans-inclusive organization, this is against our values of equality, inclusion and solidarity.

✗ WE AVOID

LGBT, LGBTQIX, homosexuality, gay and lesbian (if used alone to refer to the whole LGBTQIA+ community).



✓ **NON-BINARY, NON-BINARY PEOPLE (SOMETIMES SHORTENED TO 'NB' OR 'ENBY')**

i Non-binary refers to a spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or exclusively feminine, i.e. identities that are outside the gender binary.

? **WHY**

'Non-binary' is an umbrella term for people who do not identify within a gender binary, i.e. are not a woman or a man. It includes, but is not limited to, people who are genderqueer, agender, bigender, gender-fluid etc. 'For example, some people have a gender that includes elements of being a man or a woman, or a gender that is different than either male or female. Some people don't identify with any gender'²¹ (agender). Some people experience gender in a fluid way that can change over time (gender-fluid). It is better to use this umbrella term than 'gender minority', as being considered part of a minority can be very 'othering' and reinforces the idea that some humans are not the norm, rather than being less common.

Non-binary people are included in the umbrella term 'trans', since they do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth. However, some non-binary people do not consider themselves transgender. We therefore favour use of 'trans and non-binary people' in our writing. This also affords greater visibility to non-binary people, who are often erased. It is also important to be aware that binary gender and sex terms are still important descriptors in anti-sexism work.

✓ **PANSEXUAL**

i A pansexual person is one whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex or gender. Pansexuality and bisexuality are not quite the same; a bisexual person experiences attraction to people of two or more genders. The term pansexual has evolved and gained popularity within the queer community because it is more explicitly inclusive of trans and gender non-conforming people.

? **WHY**

It is important that we don't conflate pansexuality with bisexuality, and include both in equality forms etc., respect people's identification of their sexuality in the way that feels right to them.



✓ PARENT, PARENTHOOD

i To describe the role in raising children without directly ascribing gendered roles. If trans parents have a preferred specified gender role, such as 'mother' or 'father', this should be respected. If unsure, it is more inclusive to use 'parent'.

? WHY

In patriarchal culture, social norms around gender result in designated roles for parents that reflect expectations of that gender. Some transgender and non-binary people may identify with these roles. However, some may prefer to use other names to designate parenthood. The important principle here is to be inclusive in the broader sense by describing people as 'parents', but if individual parents have a preference for a role name, to respect their choice.

✗ WE AVOID

'mother' or 'father' (avoid assuming the adoption of gendered roles by transgender parents)

✓ PASSING

i If someone is regarded, at a glance, to be a cisgender man or cisgender woman. It is also sometimes used to describe homosexual, bisexual or pansexual people who are assumed to be heterosexual on the basis of social assumptions relating to gender norms.

Cisgender refers to someone whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth. This might include physical gender cues (hair or clothing) and/or behaviour which is historically or culturally associated with a particular gender.

? WHY

Whether an LGBTQIA+ person 'passes' as heterosexual and/or cisgender in a society in which LGBTQIA+ people experience discrimination can have an impact on their experiences. For example, someone who can 'pass' as cisgender or heterosexual may be less likely to be subjected to harassment or abuse. The term is often used in queer communities and cultures.

✓ PRONOUN

i A pronoun is a word we use in place of a 'proper noun', e.g. someone's name. Often pronouns are words we use to refer to people's gender in conversation - for example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender neutral language and use pronouns such as they/their and ze/zir.

? WHY

In the context of LGBTQIA+ inclusion, it can be supportive to make declaration of pronouns part of standard practice, for example, by using them in email signatures, in introductions and in meetings. By doing so we can avoid making assumptions about a person's gender without having asked, and do not put the onus on people who use pronouns that are different to what might have been assumed to correct us, as this can cause an uncomfortable situation and contribute to feelings of gender dysphoria.

✗ WE AVOID

assuming it is correct to describe someone as 'he' or 'she' based on their name or physical appearance

✓ QUEER

i Although historically a discriminatory term, this word is now being used as an umbrella term for people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender.

? WHY

Despite previously being used as an insult, 'queer' is a term increasingly used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It can also be a way of rejecting the perceived norms of the LGBTQIA+ community. Although some LGBTQIA+ people view the word as a slur, it was reclaimed in the late 1980s by the queer community who have embraced it.²² Some people use it because they want to denote their membership of the community but might not want to reveal personal information, e.g. in a work setting. For some, it is useful shorthand if they have more than one queer identity, i.e. are bisexual and non-binary. For others, it allows for fluidity without definition, or might refer to non-conventional lifestyle or family choices.²³ People may also make reference to 'queer culture' – i.e. films, books, genres produced by the LGBTQIA+ community, or talk about 'queer theory', which refers to a genre of academic and political study that challenges or subverts cis/heteronormativity.

It is important to be aware that for some, particularly older members of the LGBTQIA+ community, the term 'queer' can still have negative personal connotations or be triggering. Sensitivity to this and a commitment to referring to people in the terms they wish to be referred to is a fundamentally important principle.

✓ SEXUAL DIVERSITY, GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION (SDGIE)

i SDGIE is used to talk about work in support of the rights of LGBTQIA+ people, rather than about LGBTQIA+ people themselves.

? WHY

We firmly believe that everyone has a right to realize their potential, and to have the opportunity to live free of poverty in a secure and more equitable world. Our sexualities and gender identities are positive, core parts of being human and experiencing wellbeing and fulfilment. And yet, when diversity of sexuality and gender identity are rendered invisible or become 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 be compounded, and interventions can be inappropriate or fail to reach LGBTQIA+ people altogether, resulting in more marginalization of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

For more information, see Oxfam's Sexual Diversity and Gender Identity Rights policy.²⁴



✓ SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY (SOGI)

i SOGI is used to talk about work in support of LGBTQIA+ people and their rights.

? WHY

Everyone has a sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), whether they identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, heterosexual or cisgender. However, the term SOGI (or SDGI - sexual diversity and gender identity) is most frequently used in describing work with people that identify as LGBTQIA+. In some contexts, particularly in places where homosexuality and/or trans identities are criminalized, it is safer to use this term than LGBTQIA+ to refer to work to support LGBTQIA+ people. If you are not sure which is most appropriate, seek advice from a specialist in your context.

✓ THEY/THEM

i Pronouns that do not specify gender.

? WHY

They/them pronouns are used by many (but not all) non-binary people, including people we work with, and it is important to respect people's identity and choice of pronouns by using the correct ones when known. Other non-binary pronouns exist (neopronouns) though they are less commonly used, e.g. 'ze', 'sie' and 'co'.

Unless it is necessary to refer to a person's gender or sex (i.e. it is relevant in the context) or the person you are referring to has expressed a preference, you could use the gender neutral they/them. While preference for these pronouns will take getting used to for some, this language is inclusive of people who do not identify with gendered pronouns while being non-offensive to people who do identify with gendered pronouns on the whole. Using he and she is still fine when that is what is preferred. It is good practice when conducting interviews to ask people how they prefer to be referred to.

✓ TRANS MAN, TRANSGENDER MAN

i A transgender person who identifies as a man (or whose gender identity is of a man) and was assigned female at birth.

? WHY

See 'transgender'.

It is important to respect the gender identity of transgender people.

Sometimes trans people experience confusion or deliberate misattribution of their gender in the way that they are referred to – for example, someone who is AFAB and a trans man (assigned female at birth but identifies as a man) may be incorrectly referred to as a trans woman, due to assumptions made about their sex assigned at birth. In a society that upholds the human rights to equality, freedom of expression, privacy and self-determination, we must respect how people wish to be referred to.



✓ TRANS-INCLUSION

i A trans-inclusive approach to gender justice is one that actively includes transgender people, recognizing that there are many ways that people experience discrimination under patriarchy. While gender justice typically focuses primarily on discrimination against (cisgender) women in a system in which (cisgender)

men have more power and resources, a trans-inclusive approach will also take into account the way that transgender people can be affected in similar and different ways by the same system. Transgender is an umbrella term for all people who do not identify with the gender that is typically correlated to their sex assigned at birth; it includes trans women, trans men and non-binary people, in

all their diversity and as differently expressed in the different contexts and cultures in which we work. A trans-inclusive approach should not just recognize that transgender people exist, but actively work to understand and address the ways that trans people are differently prevented from exercising their human rights, such as access to work, housing and healthcare.

? WHY

Our commitment to gender justice includes all people that are adversely affected by patriarchal discrimination, norms and structures, in line with our feminist principles, ‘feminism is for everyone’ and ‘championing diversity’. We take an intersectional feminist approach, which means that when we think about gender injustice we take into consideration the way that different intersecting forms of discrimination contribute to different experiences under patriarchy, e.g. a Black woman’s experience of sexism may be different to that of a white woman because that experience may intersect with racism, and a trans woman’s experience of sexism may be different to that of a cisgender woman, since she may also experience transphobia. A Black trans woman may experience intersecting discrimination on the basis of race, gender and trans identity, and is therefore

more likely to live in poverty as a result. Oxfam understands that different forms of discrimination are related, and as such our approach to work on inequality takes into account all forms of discrimination that contribute to the root causes of poverty and suffering.

If you are writing about gender justice and want to do so in a way that includes trans people, you could do so by including a short statement in the opening of your document that states that ‘when we talk about women and men, we include trans women and trans men. We also include non-binary people and people of other genders as differently expressed in the different countries and cultures in which we work.’ This statement could be amended to fit the specific context, e.g. referring to Hijra in India or Muxes in Mexico.

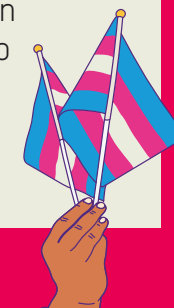
Alternatively, if you are writing about women and girls specifically, you could write ‘women (including trans women)’.

Non-binary people are included in the trans umbrella, though not all non-binary people identify

as transgender. We therefore recommend using ‘trans and non-binary people’ to talk about people who are not cisgender. This can also be useful for visibility, since non-binary people are frequently erased from trans narratives.

Ideally a trans-inclusive approach will identify the ways that trans people are specifically impacted by discrimination. However, if you are writing about a project which did not take these different impacts into account, you could acknowledge this in your paper as a possible limitation.

It is important to consider the fact that in many countries and contexts transgender people are criminalized and as such, the priority consideration should always be the safety of trans people themselves. Similarly, if there are trans activist organizations in the area in which you work, it is best to be led by how they wish to be referred to in line with our feminist principle, ‘nothing about us without us’.



✓ TRANS WOMAN, TRANSGENDER WOMAN

i A transgender person who identifies as a woman (or whose gender identity is of a woman) and was assigned male at birth.

? WHY

See 'transgender'.

It is important to respect the gender identity of transgender people. Sometimes trans people experience confusion or deliberate misattribution of their gender in the way that they are referred to – for example, someone who is AMAB and a trans woman (assigned male at birth but identifies as a woman) may be incorrectly referred to as a trans man, due to assumptions made about their sex assigned at birth. In a society that upholds the human rights to equality, freedom of expression, privacy and self-determination, we must respect how people wish to be referred to.

✓ TRANS, TRANSGENDER, TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

i People whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth.

? WHY

Gender identity is how we see ourselves – our internal and personalized perception of our own gender. This may differ from the sex we were assigned at birth or how society might label us. An intersectional and inclusive feminist approach to our work demands that we be aware of and explicitly consider the way that aspects of our work might differently affect the rights and realities of transgender people. We favour 'trans' or 'transgender' over 'transgendered' since the latter implies that it is something that is done to people. While 'transsexual' has been used historically, and some people still identify with the term, many people consider it a slur so we should favour 'trans' where possible.

✗ WE AVOID

transgendered, transsexual

✓ TRANSPHOBIA

i The fear or hatred of people who are transgender.

? WHY

Transphobia is a form of discrimination and is fundamentally at odds with work towards creating a more equal world. We must be aware of and explicitly consider how transphobic discrimination may intersect with our work and how it affects those we support. At Oxfam, our commitment to gender justice includes trans people.



✓ WOMXN

i The term 'womxn' is sometimes used to indicate that trans women are included in your definition of women. It is more commonly used in some countries than others.


? WHY

Whilst the majority of the time we use the spelling 'women', in some contexts it may be appropriate to use 'womxn', which can be seen as a mark of inclusion and solidarity. However, some trans people object to the phrase on the basis that trans women are women and the use of 'womxn' might suggest otherwise. Think about what works in your context and consult with the relevant specialists if you are unsure. An alternative option might be to make a statement at the beginning of your work stating that when you talk about 'women' you include trans people, or if not, that this might be a limitation of the work.



3 SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS

Sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) include the right to bodily autonomy, as well as to good-quality essential healthcare such as treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), access to contraceptives, safe and legal abortion, menstrual healthcare, and maternal care and support for pregnant people. Because of global gender inequality, many people we work with – the majority of them women, though also LGBTQIA+ people – face barriers in achieving their sexual and reproductive health rights. This section includes terminology related to sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR).



✓ ANTI-ABORTION, ANTI-CHOICE

i A person who does not believe in the right to safe, legal abortion.

? WHY

The term 'pro-life' is emotive and misleading. Anti-abortion is accurate and avoids negative connotations that cause discrimination against people that need or choose to have abortions.

✗ WE AVOID
pro-life



✓ BREASTFEEDING PEOPLE, PEOPLE WHO BREASTFEED

i People who feed their baby with milk from their breasts.

? WHY

Not all people who breastfeed identify as women, e.g. non-binary parents.

✓ MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS, PERIOD PRODUCTS

i Products such as pads, tampons, cups and special underwear, used by people who menstruate to collect blood during their period.

? WHY

The phrase 'sanitary products' implies that periods are in themselves unclean. This reinforces the stigma around menstruation and female reproductive biology. This matters because around the world people have been discriminated against because of the fact that they menstruate, and a large part of the reasoning is that this makes women 'unclean'. The phrase 'menstrual products' describes exactly the same items and is universally understood, but does not carry these negative connotations. It is factually accurate and neutral. 'Feminine hygiene' further assumes that menstruation is innately feminine and does not include people who menstruate who do not identify with femininity, i.e. non-binary people and trans men.

✗ WE AVOID

sanitary products, feminine hygiene

✓ PEOPLE WHO MENSTRUATE, WOMEN, GIRLS, TRANS MEN AND NON-BINARY PEOPLE WHO MENSTRUATE

i All people who experience menstrual bleeding.

? WHY

In our work around menstruation, we should remember that while many of the negative social ideas around menstruation have a misogynist basis, menstruation is also experienced by people who do not identify as a woman or a girl. If it is appropriate in the context in which you work, this could be explicitly acknowledged and addressed.



✓ PRO-CHOICE

i People who are pro-choice are in favour of the right of pregnant people to decide whether to continue the pregnancy or to have an abortion. Pro-choice campaigners advocate for the right to safe, legal abortion.

? WHY

Personal bodily autonomy is a human right. Being able to exercise the right to make personal choices on sexual and reproductive health is a crucial aspect of gender justice work.

✓ PREGNANT WOMEN, PEOPLE WHO BECOME PREGNANT

i A person who is pregnant.

? WHY

Using the term 'expectant mothers' rather than 'pregnant women' reinforces gender stereotypes and assumes that the woman in question wants to continue the pregnancy/ will carry the pregnancy to term. 'Pregnant women' is a more neutral, less loaded term. To be more inclusive of gender non-binary, trans men, or gender non-conforming people, the term 'pregnant people' or 'people who can become pregnant' can also be used.

✗ WE AVOID

expectant mothers

✓ SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE (SRH) SERVICES

i Sexual and reproductive services can include provision of contraceptives, abortion, sexual health checks, treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and other forms of support which can include mental as well as physical.

? WHY

Provision of sexual and reproductive health services is crucial to work towards gender justice.



✓ SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS (SRHR)

i ‘Sexual and reproductive health rights’ refers to the rights of everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, HIV status or other aspects of identity, to make informed choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction.

It includes the right to make informed choices about whether or when to have children; the right to access a full range of affordable and informed family planning services, including safe abortion; and the right to accurate information and services to prevent and treat sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV and AIDS, and sexual health information and education.


? WHY

Sexual and reproductive health rights are not limited to contraception and conceiving, but where this is relevant it may be better to use ‘life planning’ rather than ‘family planning’ since ‘family planning’ makes assumptions around parenthood as a default. When writing and talking about sexual and reproductive health rights, we should consider the different needs of all people, including LGBTQIA+ people, and the barriers that different people might face in achieving their sexual and reproductive health rights.



4 SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is one of the most prevalent forms of violence against women, reportedly experienced by one in three women globally.²⁵ Sexual violence can also be experienced by men. LGBTQIA+ people are more likely to experience sexual violence than heterosexual and cisgender people.²⁶ Eliminating sexual violence, as well as other forms of gender-based violence, is therefore a vital part of our policy and programme work on gender justice. At Oxfam, we are also committed to zero tolerance of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse in our organization, as detailed in our Policy on Protection from Sexual Abuse and Harassment.²⁷ This section provides guidance on how to write about sexual violence.

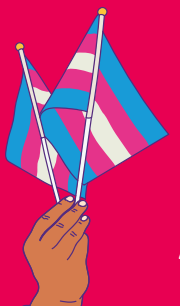


✓ RAPE

i Unlawful sexual intercourse or any other sexual penetration of another person, with or without force, by a sex organ, other body part or foreign object, without the consent of the victim.

? WHY

Sexual and gender-based violence are a major focus in gender justice work.



✓ SAFEGUARDING

i Refers to measures to protect people, and particularly those at risk, from abuse or harm.

? WHY

In Oxfam, safeguarding refers to a set of procedures, measures and practices to ensure that we uphold our commitment to prevent, respond to and protect individuals from harm committed by staff and relevant personnel. We focus on sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH), and child abuse.²⁸

✓ SEX TRAFFICKING

i People trafficked, usually across borders, for the purpose of being forced to sell sex.

? WHY

Sex trafficking is a form of human rights abuse and modern slavery.

✓ SEXUAL VIOLENCE, VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

i Acts of physical and/or sexual violence against women and girls on the basis of their gender.

? WHY

It may be better to avoid using VAWG where possible because reducing the problem to an acronym can be considered to be trivializing a serious and traumatic issue. However, many organizations who work on violence against women and girls do use it.

✗ WE AVOID
VAWG

✓ SURVIVAL SEX

i Survival sex is when a person undertakes sex work because of extreme need; for example, if they would otherwise be homeless, be unable to pay for food, medicine etc.

? WHY

Where we are working on or writing about sensitive issues such as sex work, we should always be aware of the context and where necessary make distinctions where sex work is undertaken as a result of extreme vulnerability and poverty.



✓ SURVIVOR OF RAPE

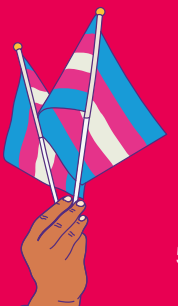
i Someone who has experienced rape.

? WHY

'Survivor of rape' gives agency to people who have experienced rape and avoids disempowering them by labelling them as victims. It also emphasizes the fact that experience of rape is something people have to live with thereafter.

✗ WE AVOID

victim, victim of rape



MIGRATION AND REFUGEE RIGHTS



Oxfam works to support people who have been displaced globally, whether due to conflict, climate change or other factors.

Around the world, we strive to support displaced people with their immediate basic needs for clean water, shelter, food and work, and also to advocate for their long-term wellbeing, both in their own nations and in the countries which host them. We also engage with allies and all levels of government to focus on peace and find sustainable solutions to the climate crisis, and to the conflict and violence that ruin so many lives.

We push for wealthy countries to be more responsive to the phenomenon of migration and do their fair share by responding to the needs of refugees and welcoming them for resettlement. And we advocate for public policies that will protect the rights of displaced families as they strive to rebuild their lives and guarantee their children a better future – in their countries of origin or the ones in which they settle.²⁹

There are many technical nuances to language used around migration that convey important meaning in terms of legal status. The language used in relation to migrants and refugees in public discourse can be a contributing factor to negative attitudes towards people migrating, and can serve to obscure the root causes of those fleeing conflict or climate change, or migrating for economic purposes. It is important that the language we use to talk about migration is technically accurate, and centres the humanity and dignity of the people we are writing about. This section provides guidance on how to write about migration, refugees and displacement.



✓ **ASYLUM SEEKER, PERSON/PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM**

i A person seeking international protection but whose claim to refugee status has not yet been accepted. Not all asylum seekers will be recognized as refugees, but every recognized refugee was initially an asylum seeker. Even if an asylum seeker's refugee status is not granted, they might still be entitled to complementary protection under the principle of non-refoulement (see below).

? **WHY**

In some cases it might be necessary to make clear the difference between 'migrants', 'refugees' and 'asylum seekers', while acknowledging that everyone needs to have their rights respected, regardless of their migratory status (see 'mixed migration' below). Try to be as clear as possible and to use the correct terms when writing or speaking about people seeking asylum. Also remember that, potentially, any person crossing an international border could be an asylum seeker. That is why it is key to respect the principle of non-refoulement and provide legal assistance for those who might need it at the border.

✗ **WE AVOID**

illegal immigrant

✓ **DISPLACED PERSON / PEOPLE, PERSON/PEOPLE FORCED TO FLEE**

i A person who has fled their home due to persecution, armed conflict, violence, natural disasters and/or famine.

? **WHY**

The acute lack of access to basic and economic services or educational opportunities may also be considered a cause of forced displacement.

✓ FORCED DISPLACEMENT

- i** The involuntary movement of a person or people away from their home or home region as the result of persecution, conflict, natural disaster or any other reason that seriously threatens their safety. The acute shortage of basic and economic services or educational opportunities may also be considered a cause of forced displacement.

✓ INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON

- i** The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement define internally displaced persons as 'persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.'³⁰

✓ IMMIGRANT

- i** A person who moves from one place to another permanently, with a view to gaining residence there.

? WHY

When writing about migration, try to be clear on whether you are talking about migrants/immigrants or migration/immigration. Try to avoid language that might reinforce negative cultural connotations.

✓ IRREGULAR MIGRANT / MIGRATION, UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANT/MIGRATION

- i** There is no universally accepted definition of irregular migration. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines it as 'movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving country'.³¹

? WHY

People are not illegal. Crossing an international border without the legal status for it is an administrative fault. Avoid language which reinforces the concept of migration and refugees as a problem or implies criminal activity. It is preferable to refer to people as simply 'people', e.g. people seeking asylum, people seeking refuge, people migrating to Europe, people in need of protection, people seeking to rebuild their lives.

✗ WE AVOID

illegal migrant/migration

✓ MIGRANT

i 'A person who moves away from their place of residence to another, whether this is within their own country or across borders.'³² This may be, but is not necessarily, for improved work conditions or due to other concerns.

? WHY

It's not up to us to decide why people are migrating. In some cases it might be necessary to make clear the difference between 'migrants' and 'refugees', while acknowledging that everyone needs to have their rights respected, regardless of their migratory status (see 'mixed migration' below). Language used around migrants should be mindful of some of the negative cultural connotations. It is best to give as much situational context as possible, e.g. when discussing migrant workers.

✗ WE AVOID

economic migrant, expat, transit migrant

✓ MIGRATION

i Migration refers to the movement of a person or an expression of mobility. Often used in reference to a nearing or crossing of human-made borders, migration is simply a movement of a person, be it temporary or permanent. Migration is a natural phenomenon and never a crisis.

? WHY

In some cases, people may use the term 'migration' to describe movement made by choice, distinguished from forced displacement. The complex and varied causes that lie behind a decision to migrate suggest that it is perhaps best viewed as a 'continuum' ranging from forced to voluntary movement. Between these two extremes, there are varying degrees of free choice or coercion involved in migrants' movement to another city, country or continent.

✗ WE AVOID

migration crisis/surge/spike

✓ MIGRATION AS A COMPLEX PHENOMENON

i Migration is a natural and complex phenomenon to be managed for the good of all.

? WHY

Migration is not a challenge/ crisis/problem. It is not a threat that needs to be stopped. There are many reasons why people flee their homelands, including conflict, persecution, climate change, scarce resources, extreme poverty and inequality, and often a mixture of circumstances.

✗ WE AVOID

migration crisis, refugee crisis, migration challenge, migration problem

✓ MIXED MIGRATION

i The term describes the reality of movements of people with varying protection profiles, reasons and needs – including refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants, as well as those who are in an irregular situation (also see ‘irregular migrant/migration, undocumented migrant/migration’ above) trafficked persons, unaccompanied and separated children – moving along the same routes, using the same transport or means of travel, often in large numbers.

? WHY

It is important to talk about mixed migration because it addresses the reality of current global movements, regardless of destination and transcending the usual stagnant categories (refugees, migrants) to address a changing and complex reality in which the fundamental rights of all persons in these contexts must prevail.

✓ NON-REFOULEMENT

i Non-refoulement is the international law principle by which a State can under no circumstances return anyone under their jurisdiction or in their territory to a country where they might be at risk of persecution, human rights violations or death.

? WHY

Non-refoulement is an important principle in our work to support refugees and people seeking asylum.

✓ PUSHBACKS

i The special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants at the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights defines pushbacks as ‘various measures taken by States... which result in migrants, including asylum seekers, being summarily forced back, without an individual assessment of their human rights protection needs, to the country, or territory, or sea...from where they attempted to cross or crossed an international border’, which may lead to a violation of the principle of non-refoulement.³³

? WHY

It’s important to always say ‘alleged’ or ‘reported’ pushback unless the allegation has been proven.

✓ PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DISPLACEMENT, PEOPLE IN CONTEXTS OF DISPLACEMENT

i When we speak of people in contexts of displacement, we refer to all of those whose lives are impacted in one way or another by global displacement. This includes people who are forcibly displaced as well as their host communities, those who choose to move seeking a better life, and those who remain.

? WHY

These are very comprehensive terms that encompass not only those people on the move but also their communities of origin and their host communities in the places of transit and destination.

✓ PEOPLE SEEKING... (SAFETY, SECURITY, PROTECTION, ASYLUM, REFUGE, TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES ETC.)

i People who have left their home for a variety of reasons.

? WHY

Strictly speaking, a person can never be illegal. Only actions can be illegal. It is better to emphasize that people are people, in complicated circumstances, and to avoid language with negative connotations that can be dehumanizing.

✗ WE AVOID
illegal migrants

✓ UNACCOMPANIED MINOR, UNACCOMPANIED CHILD/CHILDREN, LONE CHILDREN

i 'An unaccompanied child is a person who is under the age of 18, unless, under the law applicable to the child, 'majority', i.e. the age at which a person is capable of being responsible for their acts, is attained earlier, and who is 'separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so'.³⁴

? WHY

Children who arrive alone seeking asylum/international protection are entitled to certain and different rights than adult asylum seekers or children seeking asylum with their families. The basic guiding principle in any child care and protection action is the principle of the 'best interests of the child'. Effective protection and assistance should be delivered to unaccompanied children in a systematic, comprehensive and integrated manner.

✓ REFUGEE

i A person who has fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and has crossed an international border. Many international legal documents, especially the 1951 Refugee Convention and subsequent protocols, define a refugee as 'someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion'.³⁵

? WHY

Sometimes it is important to point out that someone has received protective status, such as refugee status, in their country of refuge. Strictly speaking, a person can never be illegal. Only actions can be illegal.

✗ WE AVOID

illegal migrants

✓ STATELESS PERSON

i A person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law. People who meet this definition are of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) under its mandate.

RACE, POWER AND DECOLONIZATION

Indigenous
Women
will lead us
FORWARD



SILENCE IS
VIOLENCE

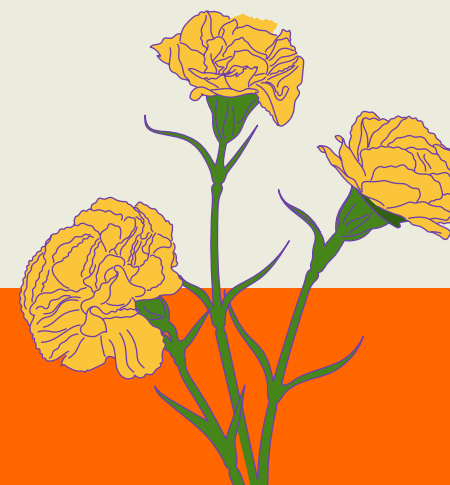
Oxfam recognizes that we cannot end poverty and inequality unless we tackle the unequal power structures and systems that keep people oppressed.

The power imbalances we see today between countries and communities are rooted in the legacy of colonialism, which continues to have a profound impact on inequality and global racial injustice. Black, Indigenous and People of Colour are less likely to hold power, whether economically, politically or socially, than white people. Racism makes it harder for

people to earn a living, feed their children and put a roof over their heads. Countries in the global majority (usually referred to as the 'Global South'), are still more often exploited in the international flows of finance and are most acutely affected by the climate crisis, by conflict and by fragility.

The Black Lives Matter movement and decolonial activists have forced the 'international development' sector to recognize the reality of racism and colonialism within our work, including in our approaches, practices and how we communicate about what we do. Applying a racial justice lens to our analysis of poverty and inequality helps us better understand the systems we seek to change; it also helps us eliminate colonial legacies and racist ideas that privilege 'whiteness' in our ways of working. Historically, the language that

has been used in the 'international development' sector to talk about the people we work to support has conveyed ideas that reinforce the very systems we are trying to disrupt, and has often been based on inaccurate and discriminatory perceptions that reinforce 'white saviourism'. In this section we share words and phrases that address the racism, power imbalances and colonialism that are each intrinsically related to the poverty and inequality we see in the world, and suggest alternatives which name forms of oppression, shifting the lens to centre the reality of people in the global majority. Definitions in this section may be updated in line with the development of the Racial Justice Framework.



✓ ACCOUNTABILITY TO DONORS, ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE PEOPLE WE WORK WITH

i 'Accountability to donors' describes the relationship with donors in which we demonstrate how we have used their funds responsibly. 'Accountability to the people we work with' describes our relationship with and responsibility to the people our programmes seek to support.

? WHY

The use of words like upwards and downwards implies a hierarchical dynamic between donors and people supported by projects.

✗ WE AVOID

upstream/upwards accountability, downwards accountability

✓ ALLY, ALLIES, ALLYSHIP

i 'Allyship' refers to the support given by people with more systemic power ('allies') to people and communities that experience systemic oppression, with the aim of dismantling those systems of oppression in pursuit of justice, equality and human rights. For example, a white person may be an ally to People of Colour, or a heterosexual person may be an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community. Allyship requires humility, active work and an ongoing process of listening, learning and using the privilege afforded through systemic power structures to work in solidarity and challenge inequality and oppression in a meaningful way.

? WHY

It makes it less difficult for people who experience systemic oppression to dismantle the structures that enforce it if they have the support of people from the 'in group' — who have access to systemic power — working to deconstruct this from within. It is also not just for those who are most affected by discrimination to have to undertake social justice work. In working for a world of equality, inclusion and accountability, we must be self-aware and committed to learning about oppressions we are less familiar with to make sure we are able to support all of the people we work with and that no one is left behind.

✓ ANTI-BLACKNESS, ANTI-BLACK RACISM

i The Movement for Black Lives defines anti-Blackness as racism towards Black people specifically, 'which voids Blackness of value while systematically marginalizing Black people and their issues.'³⁷ This can take the form of overt racism and it also refers to the 'covert structural and systemic racism that predetermines the socioeconomic disadvantage that Black people experience.'³⁸ Racial Equity Tools also describes how this may be discrimination in policies, institutions or ideologies, and can affect access to work, equal healthcare, education and other basic human rights.³⁹ See also 'institutional racism' and 'racist policies'.

? WHY

Anti-Black racism is at the heart of global inequality. Understanding colonial history and how the legacy of this endures in the 21st century is key to tackling the root causes of inequality and poverty. In working for a just and equal world, we must take an intersectional feminist approach that centres the deconstruction of anti-Blackness in our anti-racist practice.

✓ ANTI-RACISM

i Anti-racism is more than being non-racist. Anti-racism recognizes that racism has systemic and structural elements, and actively takes steps to combat them. This work often requires changing systems, policies and practices and taking positive measures to correct for the disadvantages inflicted by racism. In essence, it is a practice that is used to disrupt racism.

? WHY

People often assume that not making extreme racist statements or not being affiliated with white supremacist groups is synonymous with not being racist. Anti-racism takes an intentional approach to tackling racism, as opposed to just being 'not racist'. It involves work to dismantle racist systems and structures as well as disrupting the racist ideas we might hold as individuals.³⁶

✓ ANTISEMITIC, ANTISEMITISM

i Prejudiced belief or behaviours towards people of Jewish faith. This can take the form of promoting negative stereotypes, social exclusion or violence.

? WHY

Antisemitism has a long global history, an extreme example being the Holocaust. We work with people of many faiths in our work for equality and have a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination against any individual or group on the basis of faith.

✓ BIRACIAL, MULTIRACIAL

i A person identified as having parents or generational lineage of differing races.

? WHY

Avoid 'mixed race' if possible as it aligns with a narrative of a 'pure race'. However, if someone chooses to identify themselves in this way it should be respected.

✗ WE AVOID
mixed race

✓ BLACK, BLACK PERSON

i A person who is of African or African Caribbean heritage. Black can be both an identity and can also be used politically or as an organizing or solidarity identity drawing together people of different racialized identities in a common struggle.

? WHY

Black should be capitalized. Previously, other ethnic identities have been recognized with capital letters, e.g. Indigenous, Asian-American, but 'Black' has not been, even though it is an identity in its own right.

✗ WE AVOID
black

✓ BLACK, INDIGENOUS AND PEOPLE OF COLOUR (BIPOC)

i 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.⁴⁰

? WHY

When referring to the UK only, we say 'Black and People of Colour' or 'BPOC'. In other contexts, the term 'racialized peoples' is used, as well as 'Black and brown people' to avoid de-personalizing the issue entirely through persistent use of one single term or acronym.

✓ CAPITALISM

i An economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the State.

? WHY

Naming the economic system under which decisions are made is important in order to create space to challenge it. In Oxfam's work on inequality, it is sometimes necessary to challenge elements of the capitalist system – for example, in our work with the private sector to ensure that human rights are upheld in private businesses.

✓ CASTE, CASTEISM

i 'Caste' refers to the hereditary class system of Hindu society, based on the idea of ritual purity. This system exists in India and Nepal. 'Casteism' refers to prejudice or discrimination on the basis of caste. The caste system is unlike the class system because there is no vertical/upward mobility. It's also related to different roles and professions in society, with Brahmins at the top (priests/scholars) and Dalits/formerly the 'Untouchables' (street cleaners etc.) at the bottom, often considered to be outside the caste system. It wasn't until the British colonization of India that the caste system became so entrenched, divisive and so closely tied to colourism. The British Raj deliberately gave more rights and access to Brahmins in shaping colonial policy as part of a 'divide and conquer' tactic.

? WHY

We work against inequality in all forms; discrimination on the basis of social or cultural identity is at odds with respect for all humans as equal in rights.

✓ CAPACITY SHARING, BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, TRUE PARTNERSHIPS, MAKING CONNECTIONS, LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER, WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS, RESPONDING TO TRAINING REQUESTS, PEER-TO-PEER KNOWLEDGE SHARING

i These terms acknowledge that Oxfam and other NGOs should 'share' capacities, not 'build' the capacity of others. They are also more specific about the nature of the relationship between the organization and the people we work with. They demonstrate greater awareness of how language is at times used in a way that conveys power and privilege or to reproduce and reinforce discrimination and exclusion.

? WHY

This shift in thinking and language is fundamental to truly addressing systems of power. It's about working together to end poverty, as opposed to taking a top-down approach.

✗ WE AVOID

capacity building

✓ CLAIMING POWER, HOLDING OTHERS ACCOUNTABLE, SUPPORTING PEOPLE, EXPOSING AND REMOVING STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO PEOPLE EXERCISING THEIR POWER

i These terms refer to expansion of the capabilities and conditions of people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and/or hold accountable the people and institutions that affect their lives. This supports an individual's or group's ability to make transformative life choices in a context where this was previously denied.

? WHY

People we work with already have power in and of themselves. This is not something that can be given to them by others.

✗ WE AVOID

empowerment

✓ COLOURISM

i Prejudice or discrimination against people with darker skin tones. This discrimination can come from people of the same ethnic group or from those with more racial privilege, including white people. See also 'anti-Blackness' and 'colonialism', as colourism is an expression of anti-Blackness and part of the colonial legacy.

? WHY

Colourism is completely at odds with work towards equality and we must have a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination on the basis of identity.

✓ COLONIALISM

i Colonialism is the domination of one country by another through violence – 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.⁴¹

See also 'white supremacy' and 'racism'.

? WHY

Naming the historical and current system of global power is important in order to create space to challenge it. Ongoing and legacy colonialism impact power relations in most of the world today. For example, white supremacy as a philosophy was developed largely to justify European colonial exploitation, including enslaving African peoples, extracting resources from much of Asia and Latin America, and enshrining cultural norms of whiteness as desirable both in colonizing and colonizer nations.⁴²

✓ COLONIALITY

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

? WHY

In our work against poverty and inequality we must recognize the impact of colonial legacies on global power imbalances today.

✓ DECOLONIZATION

i Decolonization is the act of achieving independence from colonialism and undoing the harm caused. In the context of '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 their culture, society, education, language and voice.⁴³

? WHY

Decolonization goes beyond the process of undoing more obvious forms of power and dominion of one country and/or actor over another. In the context of Oxfam, it means undertaking a radical, intentional questioning and unpacking of our history and coloniality in our ways of working, including policy and practice. This disruption also has to take place within the wider international development and humanitarian sector. Decolonization requires us to reset the terms of debate around aid and development and the 'white gaze' which informs it. The end goal is a sector which no longer isolates, compartmentalizes or marginalizes the knowledge, experiences and practices of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, but is jointly and structurally owned by all who are connected to dismantling poverty and inequality.⁴⁴

✓ ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

i 'Environmental racism' has been defined as 'the way in which minority group neighbourhoods (populated primarily by People of Colour and members of marginalized or low socioeconomic groups) are burdened with a disproportionate number of hazards, including toxic waste facilities, garbage dumps and other sources of environmental pollution and foul odours that lower the quality of life.'⁴⁵

? WHY

Naming the specific form of racism which accompanies environmental policies and practices which by design or by default negatively affect certain communities is an important step towards combatting the problem.

✓ ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLENCE

i There are various ways this concept can be understood, including: '...unsustainable use and extraction of natural resources';⁴⁶ '...the direct damage to the environment by humans, but also the violent response from the natural world as a result of human degradation of the environment and the violence humans do to one another because of their effects on the climate';⁴⁷ Resource extraction on Indigenous land without free, prior and informed consent.⁴⁸

? WHY

An intersectional approach to understanding climate justice is one that takes into account and provides active steps to address the ways in which the negative impacts of climate change are disproportionately experienced by people in the global majority, and Black, Indigenous and People of Colour in the global minority. It must also address the ways in which Indigenous peoples and communities have experienced capitalist extraction and exploitation of resources on lands to which they have cultural and historical rights.

✓ ETHNICITY

i A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioural patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base.

Examples of different ethnic groups are: Cape Verdean, Haitian, African American (Black); Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian); Cherokee, Mohawk, Navaho (Native American); Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican (Latino); Polish, Irish, Swedish (White).⁴⁹

? WHY

Be conscious in your writing of the difference between ethnicity and race. Both are social constructs used to categorize people. Race relates more to physical characteristics, whereas ethnicity relates more to social and cultural factors. As ever, try to be as specific as possible, avoid homogenization or stereotypes, and represent different ethnic groups in the way they wish to be represented.

✓ FIRST NATIONS, FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE, INUIT, MÉTIS (CANADA)

i These terms refer to the three main groups of Indigenous peoples in what is now known as Canada. These groups are highly diverse and come from hundreds of distinctive and sovereign nations with different languages, cultural norms and practices.⁵⁰

? WHY

Other terms previously used were colonial, homogenizing and offensive. Note that 'Aboriginal' is used in the Australian context but is not acceptable in Canada. The most respectful approach is to be as specific as possible in your writing about which group or nation you are talking about.

✗ WE AVOID

Indians, Eskimo, Aboriginal

✓ GLOBAL MAJORITY, GLOBAL MINORITY

i ‘Global majority’ refers to most of the population of the world that live in what is often referred to as ‘developing countries’ or ‘the Global South’ (see right). ‘Global minority’ refers to the smaller population of the world that live in wealthier nations, often described as ‘the West’ or ‘the Global North’.⁵¹

? WHY

The terms ‘global majority and ‘global minority’ shift our understanding of global power and culture away from the idea that everything centres on, or is led by, wealthier and white-majority nations that historically were colonizers. It recentres Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) as the majority, moving away from the minoritization experienced in white supremacist and colonial history and culture. Since these phrases are not in common use at this point in time, if you choose to use them in your communications instead of ‘Global South’ it may be a good idea to define them at first use so readers understand what you are referring to. See also ‘MAPA’, below.

✗ WE AVOID
the West

✓ GLOBAL SOUTH, GLOBAL NORTH

i ‘Global South’ and ‘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 is in the Global South), and how they overlook the differences in contexts and cultures. Sometimes we say ‘global majority’ to reflect the proportion of the world who are BIPOC (see left).

✗ WE AVOID
third world, first world, developing countries, developed countries

✓ HIGH/MIDDLE/LOW-INCOME COUNTRY

i Classifications of countries on the basis of income (GDP).

? WHY

Talking about high/middle/low-income countries recognizes that the economic status of a country is situational rather than definitive. 'Third' vs. 'first' world implies that wealthier countries are better than poorer ones and erases the colonial history that led to the economic inequality of today. While 'third world' came to be understood to mean countries which experience widespread poverty, the term was also born from a post-war context that is now irrelevant.

It has largely been replaced with 'developing countries'. However, this term implies that wealthier countries are 'developed' and achieving full potential and that 'developing' countries are striving towards the example they are setting. It does not recognize the inequality and poverty that exist within wealthier countries, or the fact that wealth is based on unequal systems that make it difficult for other countries to 'develop'. Further, it does not take a multi-dimensional approach to measuring poverty, and does not measure the impact of inadequate business and labour rights regulation, or the sustainability of technological developments, e.g. the impact of industry on climate change, driving crises that push people further into poverty. We recognize that defining countries by income is also an inaccurate and problematic way to categorize poverty within countries, since GDP does not reflect national inequalities or wellbeing. However, sometimes in the context of writing about wealth it is the more accurate term. Another option might be 'global majority' and 'global minority' – see above.

✗ WE AVOID

developed country, developing country, underdeveloped countries, third world

✓ HOMELESS PEOPLE, HOMELESS PERSON, PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

i Not having stable, safe and adequate housing, nor the means and ability to obtain it.⁵²

? WHY

Avoid discussing people experiencing homelessness as a homogenous group, and make sure that you write about them in a sensitive and respectful way. Being homeless is a situation, not a defining characteristic of a person.

✗ WE AVOID

the homeless

✓ INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

i The term is used when referring to a variety of Indigenous peoples. However, you should be as accurate as possible about the context you are in to avoid homogenization of Indigenous peoples with different cultural, geographical and social histories and practices. Where you can, name specific groups in the way that they wish to be referred to. Please note that 'Indigenous' should be capitalized.

? WHY

While it must be stated that there is no generic term that captures the diverse identities, cultures and backgrounds of Indigenous peoples around the world, it was Indigenous peoples themselves who chose this term at the United Nations level to best describe the original peoples of a territory. Note that 'Aboriginal' is used in the Australian context but is not acceptable in Canada.

✗ WE AVOID

Aboriginal

✓ INFORMAL ECONOMY

i Informal work refers to work where there is no established agreement or contract between the employer and the employed. This means that workers often do not have access to basic working rights or the benefits given to workers in a formal system.

? WHY

'Informal economy' avoids negative connotations and is a clear and accurate description.

✗ WE AVOID

black market

✓ **INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS, INFORMAL HOUSING, PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS**

i Informal settlements are areas where people live and have constructed forms of housing but have no legal rights to the land. These areas usually are not connected to basic infrastructure or services such as water, waste management and electricity, and do not conform with building and safety regulations. They may emerge because of lack of affordable housing, economic vulnerability, low-paid work, increases in population, and migration from rural to urban areas for work.

? **WHY**

The phrases 'slum' and 'shanty town' have negative connotations and portray a homogenizing stereotype that does not necessarily accurately describe the contexts in which people live in informal settlements. The term 'informal settlement' is more neutral but accurately conveys the lack of legal status and facilities of informal settlements. The term 'slum dweller' might also be considered to be dehumanizing. However, it is important to note that many communities living in informal settlements advocating for their rights do use this phrase, such as the organization Slum Dwellers International. Always consider what is most appropriate in the context you are writing about, what is preferred by people living in informal settlements, and any sensitivities in translation.

✗ **WE AVOID**

slum, slum dwellers, shanty town

✓ INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (INGOS), CIVIL SOCIETY

? WHY

‘International development’ is the most widely understood descriptor of the sector that Oxfam works in; it is widely used and recognized internationally. However, it should be acknowledged that this phrasing is problematic and reminiscent of its colonial roots. ‘Development’ implies that wealthier countries are ‘developed’ and achieving full potential and that ‘developing’ countries are striving towards the example they are setting. It does not recognize the inequality and poverty that exist within wealthier countries or the fact that wealth is based on colonial histories (rooted in slavery, land grabs, natural resource extraction), or the fact that wealth is based on unequal systems that make it difficult for other countries to ‘develop’. It also does not measure the impact of inadequate business and labour rights regulation, or the sustainability of technological developments, e.g. the impact of industry on climate change, driving crises that push people further into poverty. ‘Aid’ also implies an unequal power relationship and one which is purely altruistic and does no harm, which is not always borne out by the evidence. We recognize that not using these phrases requires a substantial shift and the use of terms that may not be recognized more widely in the sector or in international affairs more generally. We will continue to look for suitable alternatives.

✗ WE AVOID

international development sector, international aid sector

✓ INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

i Institutional racism refers to the way that institutional policies and practices disadvantage different racial groups. This creates privilege for white people and discriminates against Black, Indigenous and People of Colour.

? WHY

Institutional racism is endemic in global power systems, and inevitably therefore also affects our ways of working. In taking an anti-racist approach to our work on equality we must be brave in challenging and dismantling systems of discrimination, and also have humility in looking at our own practices and seeking ways to overcome the institutional racism in the history of our sector.

✓ INTERSECTIONALITY

i 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. The term was created to reflect how Black women face both racism and sexism. Nowadays, it's applied more widely to other aspects of identity, and it's vital that we start but do not stop with race.⁵³

? WHY

Previously the intersection and overlap between different forms and systems of oppression was not recognized or explicitly addressed.

All forms of discrimination are the result of intersecting power structures. If we do not acknowledge this in our writing we are in danger of missing the bigger picture or presenting a biased version of reality. We must think intersectionally and centre anti-racism in our understanding of inequality in order to be able to support all of the people we work with and make sure that no one is left behind.

✓ ISLAMOPHOBIA

i Discrimination or prejudice towards people of Muslim faith. This can take the form of promoting negative stereotypes, social exclusion or violence.

? WHY

Islamophobia has a long global history but has become particularly prominent in Europe and the US in recent decades. We work with people of many faiths in our work for equality and have a zero tolerance approach to discrimination against any individual or group on the basis of faith.

✓ KYRIARCHY

i An elaboration of 'patriarchy' coined by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza that takes an intersectional approach; this means it takes into account the complex system of multiple and intersecting hierarchies and power structures, e.g. race, gender, class, sexual identity, being non-disabled etc.⁵⁴

? WHY

For our work on equality to be effective, we must be aware that inequality does not happen in a vacuum but that different forms of inequality and discrimination are caused by multiple intersecting systems of power. An intersectional approach tackles the kyriarchy as a whole. This term is not commonly used so if you choose to refer to it in your writing, please define it at first use.

✓ MICROAGGRESSION

i 'A statement, action or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against a member or members of a marginalized group such as racialized groups or members of the LGBTQIA+ community.'⁵⁵

? WHY

People who experience privilege, e.g. the racial privilege that white people experience, may perpetuate harm to people from racialized groups through their words and actions, such as appropriation of Black culture, or touching hair, for example. These may be experienced as 'microaggressions'. While this term is commonly used, it has been suggested that it would be better replaced by the term 'aggressions' to avoid minimization of the day-to-day racism that people from racialized groups experience within white supremacist culture.

✓ MINORITY ETHNIC PERSON, MINORITIZED ETHNIC PERSON, MARGINALIZED ETHNIC PERSON

i A person from an ethnic group that is a minority in a particular context.

? WHY

'Minority ethnic' places the emphasis on that ethnicity being a minority or having less power in a particular context, rather than the ethnicity itself being a minority.

✗ WE AVOID
ethnic minority

✓ MOST AFFECTED PEOPLE AND AREAS (MAPA)

i The term 'most affected people or areas', often abbreviated to 'MAPA', takes account of the social aspects of humanitarian crises. For example, the climate crisis does not affect everyone equally. The term 'most affected people and areas' makes those people more visible.

? WHY

When we talk about work towards a common goal, we have to include MAPA and those affected more than others; for example, climate activism must centre the voices of those who are most severely impacted by climate change.

✓ NAME THE SPECIFIC COUNTRIES OR REGIONS, MOST AFFECTED PEOPLE AND AREAS (MAPA)

i Talk about specific locations – avoid generalizations or homogenization of the very different countries, contexts and cultures in which we work.

? WHY

The phrases ‘Global South’ and ‘Global North’ are technically inaccurate, since they are generally used to distinguish countries based on wealth inequalities where the differences do not fall on hemispheric lines. They can also be homogenizing. ‘Most affected people and areas’ specifies those people who are specifically affected by poverty, inequality or humanitarian crisis, for example, in a given context. It also shifts the emphasis to a situation of vulnerability being contextual, rather than inherent to the people affected by it.

✓ NAME THE SPECIFIC COUNTRY, LANGUAGE, ETHNIC GROUP OR NATIONALITY

? WHY

‘Local staff’, for example, is confusing. Local to where? Anyone can be local, depending on the context. It is better to talk about specific implications rather than conflating the varied countries and contexts we work in, in ways that can be homogenizing. You could use the phrase ‘national staff’ if the staff are native to the country they are working in.

✗ WE AVOID

local language, local people, local population, local knowledge, local staff

✓ NAME THE SPECIFIC OFFICE LOCATION

? WHY

‘Headquarters’ implies a power dynamic that prioritizes one office over another. In the context in which we work the implication is very colonial, reinforcing hierarchical power issues and a top-down approach.

✗ WE AVOID

headquarters

✓ NATURAL SHOCKS, NATURAL HAZARDS, HUMAN DISASTERS

? WHY

The first two terms recognize that hazards often occur naturally, while the third indicates that the scale of disaster following a hazardous situation is often dependent on human responses.

✗ WE AVOID

natural disasters

✓ NEOLIBERALISM

Neoliberalism is a modified form of liberalism tending to favour free-market capitalism⁵⁷

? WHY

Naming the economic system under which decisions are made is important in order to create space to challenge it.

✓ OTHERING

i 'The process by which social exclusion occurs, where a dominant group claims normative status and everyone outside of that group is defined in relation to the dominant group. 'Othering' is also described as what happens when a person, group or category is treated as an object by another group. This objectification allows dominant actors to rationalize or justify the subordination of individuals and groups of people based on arbitrarily defined characteristics'.⁵⁶

? WHY

It is vital to address the othering of groups of individuals if we are to work for true equality. We must 'leave no one behind'.

✓ PEOPLE EXPERIENCING POVERTY, PEOPLE LIVING WITH/IN POVERTY, PEOPLE LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY

i People who currently live in a situation of economic poverty that might affect them in different ways. The key is that poverty is a situation they are experiencing and not an inherent characteristic of that person or community of people.

? WHY
Avoid phrases like 'poor people', which define people by their experience of poverty. Poverty is a circumstance and not a definition of a passive actor.

✗ WE AVOID
poor people, the poor, poorest people

✓ PEOPLE OF COLOUR, PERSON OF COLOUR/ COLOR (POC), BLACK, INDIGENOUS AND PEOPLE OF COLOUR (BIPOC)

i 'People of Colour' has become a preferred term over time as previously used phrases are now understood to be outdated. See also Racialized Groups, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC)', above.

? WHY
While 'People of Colour' is commonly used, it has been critiqued as being problematic as it is 'othering' to anyone who is not white. This term reinforces the idea of whiteness as standard and at the same time homogenizes all other ethnic groups.⁵⁸ However, in some ways, it has been used to create solidarity among racialized people and groups who are or have previously been minorities in campaigns against racism. See also 'people with BAME backgrounds' and 'racialized groups'.

✗ WE AVOID
BAME, BME, mixed race, coloured

✓ PEOPLE WITH BAME BACKGROUNDS, BAME COMMUNITY

i BAME stands for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. This term is commonly used in the UK, particularly in governmental records, to describe people from racialized groups.

? WHY
BAME is not commonly understood outside of the UK and has been critiqued as being othering. It is listed here to provide an explanation of the term for those not familiar with it, but Black, Indigenous and People of Colour is preferred. If used, it should always reference people first.

✗ WE AVOID
BAME, BME

✓ PEOPLE WE WORK WITH, PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS, SERVICE USERS

i People, groups or other organizations who participate in our projects or that we support in our work in a variety of ways.

? WHY

The people we work with are not passive beneficiaries: they receive support to realize their rights to food, shelter, water, asylum, political participation etc. but are agents of their own development. Choose the most appropriate alternative term based on the context and to best reflect the preferences of the people we work with. In situations where people are directly receiving services or goods, we might use the term 'service users', as is used by health and social care providers. Where we are actively engaging with people in our programmes, we might describe the people we work with as programme participants.

✗ WE AVOID

beneficiaries, recipients

✓ PRIVILEGE

i 'An unearned advantage that is available to some people because of their social status, such as being male, white, of a certain nationality, heterosexual, cisgender, non-disabled or wealthy. Privilege confers benefits with respect to access to resources, social rewards and the power to shape the norms and values of society. This should be something that all people have in a just society. People with privilege become the norm against which others are defined, hence those with privilege are considered 'individuals', while those without are defined by their socially constructed categories such as race, nationality or gender.'⁵⁹ When privilege is hoarded, for example, with an unnecessary level of resources being more likely to be owned by one group over another, it reproduces unequal systems.⁶⁰

? WHY

Until we acknowledge privilege and the way in which forms of or lack of privilege intersect, we will not be effective in addressing or eliminating inequality. Privilege was previously only associated with people who have economic wealth and not understood as a multifarious thing and that we might be privileged in one sense but not in another (see also 'kyriarchy').

✓ RACE

i A social construct produced by the dominant group in society to exert power over different groups.⁶¹

? WHY

It is important to acknowledge that 'race is a social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly colour), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time.'⁶⁴ Racial categories subsume ethnic groups. Our work on equality will not be effective unless we directly address racism and racial injustice and the colonial legacies of global inequality.

✓ RACIAL EQUITY

i This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce or fail to eliminate racial inequality and white supremacy.⁶²

? WHY

'Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, economic, health, educational and other outcomes.'⁶³ When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. See also 'racial justice'.

✓ RACIAL JUSTICE

i 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 radically redistribute racial power.⁶⁵

? WHY

Centring racial justice is essential to work to tackle poverty and inequality.

✓ RACIALIZED GROUPS

i Used to refer to all groups that do not enjoy the privileges of white people as a result of the socially constructed process of racialization. A racialized social system is 'one where economic, political, social and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of people in categories or racial groups'.⁶⁶

? WHY

Some societies are highly racialized. In others, stratification does not flow along racial lines, but along ethnicity within the same racial context, as in many African and Asian countries, or along caste-based lines, in countries where the caste system is the premier systemic oppression.⁶⁸ Specificity is important when speaking about racialized groups. However, the term has limitations; it does not make specific mention of other racial identities or of ethnicity, these being encompassed under 'historically marginalized and oppressed communities'.

We will not be effective in targeting poverty and inequality without addressing the issues caused by the oppression of racialized groups.

✓ RACISM

i Racism is a power construct and a form of discrimination that is particularly complex and difficult to prove due to the evolving nature of prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviour in global minority countries. It manifests itself overtly and covertly, with structural racism occurring through subtle and subversive forms of differential treatment. See also 'institutional racism' and 'structural racism'.⁶⁷

? WHY

Our work on equality must centre anti-racism and the experiences of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, taking an intersectional approach to targeting poverty and inequality.

✓ RACIST POLICY

i 'A racist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between or among racial groups.' Policies are 'written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations and guidelines that govern people. There is no such thing as a non-racist or race-neutral policy.' Every policy in every institution in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups. Racist policies are also expressed through other terms such as 'structural racism' or 'systemic racism'. 'Racism itself is institutional, structural and systemic.'⁶⁹

? WHY

In our work towards equality we have to be able to engage with policies that cause systemic discrimination and socioeconomic disadvantage.

✓ REPARATIONS

i ‘Reparations serve to acknowledge the legal obligation of a State, individual(s) or group to repair the consequences of violations — either because it/they directly committed them or failed to prevent them. Reparations also express to survivors and society more generally that the State is committed to addressing the root causes of past violations and ensuring they do not happen again.’⁷⁰

? WHY

‘Today’s historic inequality between rich countries and the majority of nations – and between people of racial and ethnic marginalized groups within countries and within the global population – stems significantly from the brutal era of the slave trade, and from colonialism. In purely economic terms, Britain is estimated to have extracted nearly \$45 trillion from India between 1765 and 1938.’⁷¹ As the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet noted, addressing a debate organized by the African Group of States, there is a need to ‘make amends for centuries of violence and discrimination, including through formal apologies, truth-telling processes, and reparations in various forms.’⁷² President Biden has provided his administration’s support to studying reparations for Black Americans.⁷³ Rich governments should work with bodies such as the UN Human Rights Office to explore their duty to provide reparations to survivors of racism.’⁷⁴

✓ PEOPLE FACING SOCIAL EXCLUSION, POLITICAL EXCLUSION, ECONOMIC EXCLUSION, WOMEN/MEN WHO ARE IN A VULNERABLE POSITION BECAUSE OF, WOMEN/MEN MADE VULNERABLE BY

i Talking about people as ‘vulnerable’ implies that this is inherent to them. Talking about the social exclusion of people conveys that the problem is within the system rather than the individuals who are discriminated against within that system.

? WHY

People are not vulnerable as such; they are in a vulnerable position. The vulnerability that they are experiencing is situational and does not define them. Vulnerability is the degree to which a group or individual is unable to anticipate, cope with, resist or recover from the impacts of natural or human disasters.

✗ WE AVOID

vulnerable people, vulnerable women, vulnerable men

✓ **SMALLHOLDER,
SMALLHOLDER FARMER,
AGRICULTURAL LABOURER,
SUBSISTENCE FARMER**

i Someone who works in agriculture and has a low income.

? **WHY**
Avoid the word 'peasant' or synonyms with negative and dated connotations.

✗ **WE AVOID**
peasant

✓ **SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS, INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL
JUSTICE MOVEMENTS, NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS
(NGOS), INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS
(INGOS), CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOS)**

i International humanitarian efforts to reduce poverty and suffering through technological and social development to improve health, education, income and wellbeing.

? **WHY**
The term 'aid' cements an ideology whereby an agent with resources, i.e. money, power, expertise (such as governments, institutions or NGOs) gives support to people, communities or countries deemed to be 'at risk', on a charitable basis. While this might provide valuable support in crisis situations, an ideology based on aid reinforces top-down solutions to situations which are often caused by longer-term situational factors as well as the colonial histories of many of the contexts that Oxfam works in. We should be led by the needs of the people we work with and consider how best we can support people in those contexts to achieve their rights.

✗ **WE AVOID**
aid sector

✓ **STRUCTURAL RACISM**

i A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. Structural racism identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with ‘whiteness’ and disadvantages associated with ‘colour’ to endure and evolve over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Rather, it is a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist.⁷⁵

? **WHY**

‘Structural racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism – all other forms of racism emerge from structural racism.’⁷⁶ We must address the policies, practices, norms and behaviours which perpetuate inequality and poverty, including structural racism. See also ‘institutional racism’.

✓ **SUPPORTING/PROVIDING A PLATFORM FOR, LISTENING TO, HEARING, LEARNING FROM, AMPLIFYING/ELEVATING THE VOICES OF**

i Using our privilege and power to provide a platform for and to listen to the people we work with.

? **WHY**

People we work with already have a voice – this is not something that is given by us. However, we can use the power that we do have to elevate the voices of others at a global scale.

✗ **WE AVOID**

giving a voice to, giving voice to, helping

✓ **VISIT TO *SPECIFIED LOCATION*, BUSINESS TRIP**

i Talk about specific locations.

? **WHY**

In Oxfam’s context, the phrase ‘field trip’ was previously used to describe visits to lower-income countries, whereas a trip to New York, for example, would not be considered a ‘field visit’. By using this kind of language we reinforce colonial attitudes that are contrary to the values and aims of our organization.

✗ **WE AVOID**

field visit/field trip/mission

✓ WHITE PERSON, WHITE PEOPLE

i Someone who considers themselves to be white or is racialized as white. Being seen as white is also a racialized experience, whether through feeling like a member of the racial group or being racialized in that way by others. Some people may be racialized as white without considering themselves white, and people of various ethnic groups may be racialized as non-white even if they do not hold a particular named racial identity.⁷⁷

? WHY

‘White people’ is a racial classification that refers to skin colour, and generally, but not always, to people of European origin.

✗ WE AVOID

Caucasian

✓ WHITENESS

i Whiteness is both a colour and a culture that opens doors for white people and excludes Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. The privileges are provided by the colour of one’s skin and this privilege is a legacy of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade. It affects our power, how society accepts us, and our access to things like jobs, education and political voice.⁷⁸

? WHY

Acknowledging whiteness and its meaning for our work is a first step to addressing its effects on those not racialized as white and its role in perpetuating inequality and poverty.

✓ WHITE FEMINISM

i White feminism prioritizes the issues of abled, white, cisgender, heterosexual, Western/Anglo women. It actively ignores the issues of disabled, Black/brown, trans, queer women – failing to address intersecting forms of oppression such as racism, islamophobia, and transphobia.

✓ WHITE GAZE

i The 'white gaze' assumes that the person reading or viewing something is white and holds white culture as the standard for everything. Assuming our audiences are white means we cater for these views in our communications and we overlook other experiences, norms and cultures.⁷⁹

? WHY

The white gaze has long been a manifestation of colonial practices in the 'international development' sector, where power and resources are often held in global minority countries and communications are produced from the perspective of the white gaze. Part of our work to decolonize the 'international development' sector must involve moving away from the white gaze and deconstructing racist biases to ensure that we do not cause harm to the people that we work with, and go further to be actively anti-racist in our communications.

✓ WHITE PRIVILEGE

i Refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white.⁸⁰

? WHY

Our work on equality will not be effective if we do not work to understand social and structural inequalities, such as white privilege, and have the humility to examine ourselves as an organization where power has historically been held in global minority countries.

✓ WHITE SAVIOURISM

i White saviourism defines how people want to 'fix' perceived problems in nations mainly populated by Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC). It wrongly paints BIPOC as poor, helpless and needy. It puts power in the hands of white people, and assumes they have all the knowledge, experience and tools. At Oxfam, we recognize its harm and commit to moving from saviourism to solidarity.⁸¹

? WHY

A white saviour approach to social justice work is one that is colonial by default, and may cause problems rather than solving them. We must be able to reflect in a self-critical way on the nature of our approach to our work, and make sure that we are led by the people we work with and portray them in the way that they wish to be portrayed, rather than reinforcing power structures or negative stereotypes. This is relevant both to our direct work with people and how we communicate about what we do, including our use of language and imagery.

✓ WHITE SUPREMACY

i 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, including white and lighter-skinned people.⁸²

? WHY

Previously white supremacy was not generally recognized as an issue, and was only associated with far-right ideology rather than being understood as a structural system that affects us all. We will be unable to be truly effective in our work on inequality unless we address white supremacy.

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