



# GENDER JUSTICE: TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

**WE LIVE IN A RICH WORLD. YET MORE THAN A BILLION PEOPLE LIVE IN EXTREME POVERTY, AND THE GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR IS WIDENING. GENDER IS A MAIN PREDICTOR FOR WHO WILL BE POOR AND WHO WILL HAVE POWER.**

**Gender Justice** is the goal of full equality and equity among women and girls and men and boys in all spheres of life. It is the result of women, jointly – and on an equal basis with men – defining and shaping the policies, structures and decisions that affect their lives and society as a whole. It is both an outcome and a process.

## **GENDER JUSTICE REQUIRES WE WORK TOGETHER ON TWO LEVELS**

- ▶ To change societal attitudes and behaviour that lie at the heart of gender inequality;
- ▶ To change those laws, policies and government programs that discriminate against women and sustain gender inequality.

If you don't deal with gender justice issues you are only dealing with fifty percent of the problem. You still have to go back and deal with the other half.

Teresa Mugadza,  
Zimbabwean feminist and  
human rights activist

## **WOMEN'S TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP**

**OXFAM BELIEVES THAT THE KINDS OF CHANGES WE WANT TO SEE IN SOCIETY REQUIRE TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP.**

**THIS CAN MEAN CHALLENGING EXISTING POWER STRUCTURES AND CONSCIOUSLY MOVING TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE VISION WHERE WOMEN AND MEN ARE EQUAL.**

To achieve gender justice crucial barriers to equality need to be removed. Women consistently have less recourse and access than men to legal protection and less decision-making power in and outside the home. Women are continually excluded from decision-making positions in key institutions, structures and systems.

Women are often prevented from setting their own agendas for change, or effectively advocating for the kinds of change that could lead to social transformation.

Development interventions often fail to appreciate the importance of women's existing roles and their capacity and desire to play an equal role in leadership and decision-making at all levels. Consider that only 18 countries have achieved the Beijing Platform for Action recommended target of having women comprise 50 percent of all representatives in parliament. Women's representation in national parliaments has increased from 11 per cent in 1995 to 19 per cent in 2010.

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**OXFAM CANADA USES A RIGHTS-BASED, TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH TO STRENGTHEN WOMEN AND GIRLS' CAPACITY TO MOBILIZE THEIR OWN POWER AND THAT OF OTHERS.**

**THIS MEANS WE SUPPORT PEOPLE IN REALIZING THEIR BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE, WHICH CREATES A FUNDAMENTAL AND LASTING IMPROVEMENT IN WOMEN'S LIVES.**

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Our work on Transformative Leadership encourages women to use their voice to assert their rights and access resources. We create an enabling environment for women to assume leadership at all levels (economic, social, political, cultural) and in all domains (family, community, organizations, state and religious institutions, schools and the market).

## **STORIES FROM OXFAM CANADA'S PARTNERS**

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### **WOMEN ON FARMS, SOUTH AFRICA**

The Women on Farms Project is an organization that works with women who live and work on commercial farms or in the agri-processing industry. The organization decided the time had come to create an independent organization *led* by women farm workers, and developed Sikhula Sonke, a trade union for agricultural workers. The union now has a membership of close to 4,000 members and is fast becoming a sector leader within the country's labour movement. Today, the Women on Farms Project, in addition to its support of Sikhula Sonke, continues to build capacity through rights-based education, advocacy, lobbying and case-work with individual women.

Jacoba Armoed was born in South Africa where she lived on a farm owned by a rich white landowner. She worked alongside her husband who had for years been paid partly in alcohol. Jacoba was beaten and abused regularly. Without her name on the deed of her own home she simply had to endure. Then one day Jacoba decided she had suffered enough and reached out and connected with the WFP.



Through the sharing of stories Jacoba quickly learned she was not alone when dealing with the common threads of poverty, threats of eviction, and gender-based violence. She moved from feeling isolated to gaining a sense of power. She exercised her rights and applied for a court order to stop the abuse. Her husband has come to understand that violence against women is unacceptable. Now he recognizes and even brags about Jacoba's successes. Jacoba currently serves on the board of Women on Farms Project, and at 48-years-old, has begun to call herself a feminist.

## FENACOOOP (FEDERACION NACIOALES DE COOPERATIVAS), NICARAGUA

Rosa Idalia Reyes owns land, is a cattle rancher and is president of her local agricultural cooperative in Nueva Guinea, Nicaragua. Despite the active opposition of some of the men, Rosa was elected to be in charge of women's affairs.

"I would plan to go to the communities to see projects and they would tell me there wasn't any transport. I would tell them, 'It doesn't matter; I will go by bus.' Then, they would tell me that there wasn't money for travel expenses and I would say, 'I don't need it, I brought some beans and tortillas!'" Rosa recalls. "I concentrated on demanding respect, because I knew if I lost my authority and leadership, I would fail. Now they assign me a budget, respect me and take me into account."

Rosa's agricultural co-op is part of FENACOOOP, a federation of cooperatives representing 41,000 farmers, nearly 40 per cent of them women. It is made up of agriculture, livestock, agro-industry, savings and loan, beekeeping, service, and production cooperatives.



FENACOOOP received funds from Oxfam Canada for a gender audit process, which Rosa credits with enabling the women in the organization to become more autonomous and focused on fighting for women's interests. "We need to focus on gender so women know that they have the right to land, credit, technical training and the right to participate in a cooperative," she states.

## ENDING GLOBAL POVERTY BEGINS WITH WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

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