



**OXFAM CANADA SUBMISSION  
TO THE GOVERNMENT OF  
CANADA INTERNATIONAL  
CLIMATE FINANCE  
CONSULTATION**

Climate change is inextricably linked to inequality and injustice. According to Oxfam research,<sup>1</sup> the poorest half of the global population – around 3.5 billion people – are responsible for only around 10% of total global emissions attributed to individual consumption. Due to existing social norms and structural barriers, women are the most likely to suffer from climate change, but they are at the forefront of creating change and adaptation within their communities. Women with agency, resources and power continue to minimize the effects of climate change.

## There is no climate justice without gender justice.

### RECOMMENDATION 1

#### Take a feminist approach to climate action that effectively strengthens women, girls and gender diverse people's resilience and advances gender transformation.

In alignment with the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP),<sup>2</sup> Canada can make a unique contribution by applying a feminist approach to its climate action as a means of advancing the FIAP's stated objectives of gender equality and women's empowerment. A feminist approach recognizes the importance of strengthening the resilience of women, girls and gender diverse people by looking at wider impacts on their lives including gender-based violence and violence against women and girls (VAWG), inequalities in unpaid care work and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Hence, a holistic approach to climate finance is needed that aligns with the FIAP across all six Action Areas. As stated in the FIAP, an integrated approach has the power "to deliver transformational change to those most in need."

If women are resilient in this broader and more integrated sense, if they can exercise their rights and agency, they will be better equipped to face, contribute to and/or lead effective responses to climate change.<sup>3</sup> Oxfam Canada believes that a holistic intersectional feminist approach, which addresses a range of barriers to leadership of women, girls and gender diverse people in climate change adaptation and mitigation, is the main way to differentiate Canadian support from that of other donors.

We need to go beyond gender-responsive policies and programs and take a gender-transformative<sup>4</sup> approach to building resilience. A gender-transformative approach leads to changing systems that perpetuate inequality and vulnerability to climate change. This implies tackling the systemic and structural forms of discrimination that generate unequal gender power relations, as well

as engaging past the gender binary and recognizing intersecting inequalities based on indigeneity, ethnicity, race, age, sexual identity, ability, and class.<sup>5</sup>

**Oxfam defines resilience as "the ability of women and men to realize their rights and improve their wellbeing despite shocks, stresses and uncertainty".<sup>6</sup>**

Gender-transformative climate action requires understanding that reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience requires more than technical solutions; it calls for a change in power dynamics and a commitment to tackling gender inequality. One example of a holistic and integrated approach to building resilience comes from Oxfam's work in Bangladesh in the Resilience through Economic Empowerment, Climate Adaptation, Leadership and Learning (REE-CALL) project.<sup>7</sup> This project tackles economic empowerment, disaster risk reduction (DRR), climate change adaptation (CCA), rights, care work and women's leadership. REE-CALL does this by supporting local government institutions to better prepare for the impacts of climatic and non-climatic changes and disasters. Local organizations are supported to hold these duty bearers to account, including by influencing DRR and CCA policies and budget allocations. The project focuses on recognizing, reducing and redistributing care work in order to support women to access sustainable income and employment options. Throughout the project, women are supported to exercise their leadership and claim their rights, securing them better access to, and control over, land, resources and time.

A key component of a feminist approach to climate finance is a *Feminist Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning* (MEAL) approach, which values collective knowledge generation, is context-driven and can help ensure accountability for the impacts of different climate finance approaches on gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes.

**“Feminist MEAL is based on the understanding that transformative change in unequal gender and power relations is complex and non-linear. It challenges us to think differently about what is considered evidence, pushes the boundaries of how evidence is captured, questions who gives knowledge, meaning and power, and promotes social transformation.”<sup>8</sup>**

Canada should go beyond the current Key Performance Indicators under FIAP Action Area 4 (Environment and Climate Action – greenhouse gas emission reductions, number of climate adaptation beneficiaries and women’s employment in the environment sector) and develop indicators that measure structural and systemic gender transformations (such as through tangible expressions of decision-making power, and the degree of access to, stewardship of and control over resources by vulnerable groups). All program monitoring, risk assessments and impact assessments associated with Action Area 4 should collect disaggregated data by gender, age, and other identity factors to inform gender-transformative planning and implementation.

Canada should deliver all of Canada’s climate finance applying intersectional feminist approaches, not only the portion that technically qualifies as Official Development Assistance (ODA) and falls under the Feminist International Assistance Policy. The adoption of a coherent Feminist Foreign Policy to guide all of Canada’s international relations would facilitate such a whole-of-government approach.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

**To support a just, sustainable and equitable recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada’s climate finance should:**

- (a) recognize the care economy as a building block of the low-carbon economy; and**
- (b) invest in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed structural gender and economic inequalities, with women on the frontlines of the crisis. Research by Oxfam and partners

indicates that, while COVID-19 has caused increases in both women’s and men’s unpaid care workloads, women are still doing the bulk of this work.<sup>9</sup> This pandemic has shone a light on how entrenched these gender inequalities are and the limited opportunities for women to access decision-making spaces in order to have a voice, build their own capacities and resilience, have agency and exercise their human rights.

**“Overstretched care systems and closures of schools and services mean women, particularly those living in poverty and precarity, are compensating by undertaking longer shifts in poorer conditions of employment as well as doing additional unpaid care work at home. Much like with Ebola, this comes at a great cost to women’s health, time, economic independence and political representation.”<sup>10</sup>**

As societies and governments reflect on how to recover from this crisis, it is important to start by acknowledging that we cannot accept a return to normal. ‘Normal’ has not worked for women and gender diverse people, it does not work for society, and it does not work for our environment. Oxfam’s *Climate, Covid and Care: Feminist Journeys*<sup>11</sup> offers feminist reflections on this moment through a collection of journeys, stories, and ideas from five feminist activists working at the intersection of gender justice and climate justice.

**“Care work is the vital, low-carbon work that knits society together from young to old and from household to hospital.”<sup>12</sup>**

Canada’s climate finance towards an inclusive economic recovery to COVID-19 and transformation should be guided by the Feminist Principles for a Green New Deal to drive systemic change and build back better to a caring, green and feminist future.<sup>13</sup> This will mean investing in transforming gender norms and addressing the underlying causes of these inequalities.<sup>14</sup>

This COVID-19 response and recovery sits at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, where there is an emphasis on meeting immediate needs, while at the same time ensuring that the longer-term recovery addresses the underlying and systemic causes of vulnerability, such as poverty and inequalities.

**“The nexus represents an opportunity to engage with these root causes and recognize that humanitarian crises can be caused and/or heightened by poor development policies and a lack of inclusive and appropriate development investment”.**<sup>15</sup>

Taking such a coherent and holistic approach addresses people’s vulnerability before, during and after crises, and reduces the need for crisis responses over the long term, especially in response to cyclical or recurrent shocks, such as COVID-19.<sup>16</sup> It is critical that investments at this nexus focus on both preparedness and disaster risk reduction, areas which currently fall between Canada’s development and humanitarian approaches.<sup>17</sup> Oxfam does this by building contingency budgets into development programs and taking a long-term view of humanitarian activities, recognizing the long-term nature of change and the protracted and recurring nature of most humanitarian crises.

Working across the nexus for the COVID-19 response and recovery will support the establishment of longer terms partnerships that speak to and address the full local realities of these partner organizations. As such, local women’s organizations, actors and movements have a key role to play in effective climate action and an inclusive COVID-19 recovery, given their understanding of local power dynamics and that their work already bridges the traditionally siloed areas at this humanitarian-development-peace nexus.<sup>18</sup>

## RECOMMENDATION 3

**Support and work with local women’s rights organizations to develop transformative women’s leadership and reach the most vulnerable.**

Relating to GAC consultation question 4

Taking learning from the GAC Women’s Voice and Leadership (WVL) program,<sup>19</sup> GAC should commit to their WVL feminist principles<sup>20</sup> as an overarching way of working, including across the climate finance package. Values and principles taken from *WVL Tip Sheet# 1: Feminist Values and Principles Guiding the WVL Program*:

### Feminist Principles for a Green New Deal include:

- Requiring intersectional analysis across all actions
- Recognizing the link between domestic and international climate policy
- Confronting institutional patriarchy and racism
- Centering Indigenous Peoples’ rights and leadership
- Confronting exploitative and unsustainable production patterns
- Advancing reproductive justice
- Supporting democratically controlled, community-led solutions
- Rejecting false solutions to the climate crisis that fail to address root causes
- Creating regenerative economies that center systemic, feminist alternatives
- Respecting the leadership of young people in defense of future generations.

#### PARTICIPATION

- Driven and designed by local Women’s Rights Organizations (WROs)
- Responsive to local WROs priorities

#### INCLUSION

- Taking an intersectional approach
- Prioritizing co-learning and co-creation of knowledge

#### EMPOWERMENT

- Being attentive to power relations and privilege
- Strengthening the power and sustainability of WROs

Many WROs have not received funding for resilience, humanitarian response or climate change work, because of the power dynamics of these funding modalities and networks. WROs are not seen as key actors in these patriarchal spaces, as their work is not seen as life-saving work, even though they are often the first responders and are the networks that support communities. WROs often work to ensure that services are going to the most vulnerable, that women and girls have access to sanitary materials and that vulnerable groups are receiving accurate information (including on COVID-19).

Aligned with Canada’s localization agenda and commitments, Canada should work with WROs on climate action to meet its localization targets. Such a feminist approach to localization seeks to “tackle power imbalances and patriarchal structures by shifting power to national and local WROs, which should result in improved outcomes for women, girls and gender diverse people and their communities”.<sup>21</sup>

Canada should recognize WROs as legitimate actors within the field of climate change and community resilience building because of their knowledge of communities, access to the most vulnerable and capacity to design solutions that are inclusive, context-specific and empowering for women, girls and gender diverse people. They are not simply a target group to be consulted, but should be seen as important players in decision-making spaces on how to best respond to climate change.

Canada should provide WROs with long term, predictable and flexible grant funding, and support WROs to define their locally appropriate priorities (and shift them as required), to use their voice to influence power, build movements, take action and defend their rights in relation to climate change.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

**Canada’s climate finance should support influencing, evidence-based advocacy, and engagement with government and other actors to ensure transformative change.**

A local-to-global approach driven by communities impacted by climate change is required. As part of an integrated approach, it is critical to ensure that the voices of those most at risk are heard at multiple levels and can influence climate change adaptation and mitigation planning.

Oxfam works with partners to bring the voices of communities affected by climate change into international negotiations and discussions.<sup>22</sup> Oxfam works with the communities and social movements on the frontlines of the climate crisis to reclaim power, resources, and control over decisions. Alliances can shift the debate and deepen understanding and thought leadership in order to shape equitable transition policies that leave no one behind.

Investments in strengthening women’s resilience need to be matched with associated investments in changing social norms and influencing duty bearers to address the root causes of inequalities as part of climate action.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

**Collaborate with Indigenous women’s rights organizations on climate action that protects, respects and fulfills Indigenous peoples’ rights.**

## RECOMMENDATION 6

**Canada’s climate finance must respect and uphold the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.**

Indigenous women with limited access to land and productive resources face multiple injustices and challenges from climate change. The disproportionate consequences of discrimination suffered by women land and environmental rights defenders are exacerbated because they live in rural areas and because of their

ethnicity, their socioeconomic status, and their gender identity.<sup>23</sup> The transformative leadership of these women should be given visibility, and governments should support them to put an end to the structural causes of inequality that prevent these women from exercising their leadership.

As part of this commitment, Canada's climate finance should align with *Canada's Guidelines on Supporting Human Rights Defenders*<sup>24</sup> and ensure support for women land and environmental rights defenders. These women regularly face violent backlash in response to their efforts to prompt the structural and systems transformation that is required in response to climate change and environmental degradation.<sup>25</sup> Recognizing these risks, and needing to 'do no harm', Oxfam works to defend civil society space, and protect and grow social movements that are taking climate action.

## RECOMMENDATION 7

**Commit 15 percent of Canada's international climate finance towards gender equality as a "principal" objective, and the remaining 85 percent as a "significant" objective.**

Oxfam estimates that only a small amount of climate-related ODA (around 2% globally) targets gender equality as a "principal purpose."<sup>26</sup> Canada can demonstrate global leadership in climate action to advance gender equality and women's rights by targeting at least 15% of its climate finance towards principal-purpose gender equality projects. This commitment is necessary to enable an integrated approach towards gender equality and women's empowerment, as described in the FIAP. In meeting such a target, Canada should exercise more direct oversight through bilateral financing instead of relying so heavily on multilateral institutions. Canada should also continue to advocate for the Green Climate Fund to increase its commitment to principal-purpose gender equality programming to encourage other donors to pursue gender-transformative climate action.

## RECOMMENDATION 8

**Report the grant-equivalency value of concessional loans and no longer include non-concessional loans in its public climate finance reporting.<sup>27</sup>**

## RECOMMENDATION 9

**Direct at least 25 percent of Canada's public climate finance to Least Developed Countries (LDCs), in line with wider donor commitments on aid that at least 25 percent of aid should go to LDCs. In addition, Canada should support changes to UNFCCC rules and reporting guidelines that require donors to report the share of climate finance they are contributing to LDCs and SIDS (small island developing states).**

## RECOMMENDATION 10

**Adaptation finance must be at a minimum 50% of Canada's overall public climate finance contribution.**

Climate finance that imposes additional debt obligations on developing countries can seriously deplete their fiscal capacity for investments in education, health care and other essential services on which women, girls and gender diverse people disproportionately depend. The world's poorest countries should not be forced to take out loans to protect themselves from the excess carbon emissions of wealthy countries like Canada.

Canada is among a small group of donor countries that channels a significant portion of international climate finance through loans instead of grants. In the 2017-2018 period, Canada provided 61.8% of its bilateral climate finance in the form of concessional loans to developing countries. The net value of Canada's international climate finance contribution is much less than what is reported to the UNFCCC when interest charges and other expenses on loans are taken into account. In other words, Canada overstates the net value of its climate finance contribution to developing countries.

In 2019, donor countries adopted a standard of reporting the grant-equivalency of international assistance. Canada should not lag behind on reporting its climate finance contributions in the same way that better reflects its level of investment.<sup>28</sup>

## RECOMMENDATION 11

**Canada's new long-term finance commitments should not combine public climate finance and mobilized private finance under one goal.**

## RECOMMENDATION 12

**Reporting on mobilized private finance should be conservative to build trust and avoid over-counting. Canada should support a reporting framework at COP26 that applies the Katowice principles, including reporting on a project-by-project basis, explaining the causality between public investment and mobilized finance, and how the amounts mobilized are attributed between governments.**

The role of the private sector and its connection to public climate finance must be considered carefully. The evidence is lacking that strong private sector involvement will lead to transformative feminist action or improve women's rights outcomes through climate action. In fact, a bias towards greater private sector involvement might actually be counter-productive as the Government of Canada rebalances its climate finance programming to support more adaptation. Private sector financing has struggled to meet the essential adaptation needs of poor and marginalized people, as it overwhelmingly favours mitigation over adaptation. In addition, private finance has been more likely to invest in middle-income countries over Least Developed Countries.<sup>29</sup> It would be deeply concerning if Canada were to divert its public climate finance towards private sector actors as this could reduce support for adaptation programming and loss and damage, already under-resourced areas of climate action. Public climate finance must be focused on projects and initiatives that are efficient and transformative and not on incentivizing private sector investments that may have happened anyway.

### Oxfam Canada's Camino Verde Project

Indigenous Maya Q'eqchi' and Pocomchi' women and youth in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala face many challenges living with the consequences of climate change that are exacerbated by the double injustices they face as Indigenous women with limited access to land and productive resources. These women have collective solutions and the will to implement them but often lack the means and enabling social environment.

Oxfam Canada's Camino Verde project is working with these women to strengthen small-scale enterprises using innovative, clean and sustainable business practices, making available the tools that help scale-up their initiatives – from the ASOKAPE shade-grown coffee operation to the AWINEL growers' network's diversified agriculture on plots owned by Indigenous women themselves. The project is driven by a commitment to women's transformative leadership by contributing to the social conditions for that leadership to thrive. It fosters local governance, evidence-based advocacy and the social norms required to support sustainable, climate-resilient women and youth led economic initiatives and long lasting, transformative change. An example of this is the project's support for national legislation promoting sustainable women's economic activity.

Led by Q'eqchi' and Pocomchi' Indigenous women, Camino Verde is demonstrating the importance of women's transformative leadership in practical, innovative climate action strategies

At a minimum, Canada should advocate at the UNFCCC that public climate finance commitments and goals for mobilizing private sector investment should be separate goals and not combined into one.

Foreign direct investment by Canadian businesses abroad can contribute to low-carbon solutions. However, it does not follow that Canada's public climate finance should be directed to supporting such activities. Such commercial support to Canadian business is already delivered through public institutions like Export Development Canada. Gender impact assessments would enhance the women's rights outcomes and should be integrated into EDC's due diligence process. EDC's current approach of lumping in women and girls under the category of "vulnerable people" does not fully capture the gender power dynamics and norms that hinder gender equality. Oxfam has developed gender impact assessment tools for the hydropower sector and the extractive sector to support project proponents in identifying and addressing gender impacts in a collaborative, rights-based manner.<sup>30</sup>

Under its feminist approach, Canada should work with WROs in developing countries to define their priorities for climate action without imposing any requirements on private sector involvement, and certainly not a Canadian private sector partner in particular. Local actors in the women's rights movement are best positioned to identify opportunities to collaborate with private sector actors where they exist. Oxfam's programming with the private sector emerges from longstanding partnerships with poor and marginalized communities. For example, Oxfam is implementing a weather-indexed insurance project with the private sector to support Sri Lankan smallholder farmers to combat the impact of floods and droughts.<sup>31</sup> WROs should be supported to identify and take action on opportunities for climate action that may involve collaborating with or influencing private sector actors but under no circumstances should Canada's public climate finance make private sector involvement a requirement of program funding.

A strong case would need to be made to justify why the private sector should be prioritized as a partner in public climate finance. The reference to "the private sector" in Question #6 of this consultation regarding how best to leverage Canada's strengths suggests that GAC understands private sector engagement as being focused on the Canadian private sector. The private sector is not homogenous but rather includes a wide variety of business entities of different sizes, operating in both the formal and informal economies. For example, in Indonesia and Philippines, Oxfam supports small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and smallholder farmers on business continuity planning to help them bounce back from losses after disasters.<sup>32</sup> To deliver climate programming that is transformative and feminist, Canada should consider the private sector more broadly, including the domestic private sector in developing countries, and particularly the informal economy where women are disproportionately represented.

## RECOMMENDATION 13

**Commit to developing new sources of international finance for loss and damage additional to the \$100bn commitment, which could include debt cancellation for countries affected by climate-induced disasters and a climate damages tax on major carbon emitters.<sup>33</sup>**

Canada should work with other countries to develop new sources of finance for loss and damage in cases where countries are unable to adapt quickly enough to the climate crisis. Oxfam's analysis has revealed that people in low- and middle-income countries are five times more likely to be displaced by sudden-onset extreme weather events. Women, girls and gender diverse people are disproportionately affected.<sup>34</sup> At COP26 next year, Canada should advance innovative solutions to loss and damage, including debt cancellation for countries affected by climate-induced disasters, similar to the debt cancellation that was announced by donor countries earlier this year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



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