

1.3 Oxfam International Contract for Humanitarian Action

As part of our mission to fight poverty and related injustice around the world, Oxfam International commits itself to developing a comprehensive framework around emergency¹ prevention and response. In order to distinguish ourselves as a leading international rights-based development and humanitarian actor we subscribe to the following:

1. Oxfam International affiliates subscribe to a rights-based approach to emergencies that acknowledges the universal applicability of Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law. We agree to abide by the Oxfam International Working Principles, to be held accountable to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief, and aspire to deliver aid in compliance with the Sphere Minimum Standards.

2. Within the framework of a rights-based approach, which guides all our work, in situations of extreme humanitarian crisis we will prioritize the right to life with dignity (as defined in the Sphere standards). At the same time we will actively strive to reduce beneficiary vulnerability to future disasters, to help men, women and children to again become active agents in their own lives, and help create sustainable livelihoods.

3. Oxfam International recognizes its own diversity as a resource that should be nurtured and managed in ways that optimize impact to the benefit of affected populations. This will be done through the appropriate use of advocacy, media exposure and program intervention and by making use of its comparative advantages.

4. Oxfam International acknowledges the need to gather information, views and analysis from diverse sources including partners, beneficiaries, civil society, the state, colleague human rights and humanitarian organizations and official representatives from the international community, in order to provide early warning and to inform its response activities. The diverse views of men, women and children should be sought in information gathering, emergency preparedness and humanitarian response.

5. Oxfam International commits to developing an integral comprehensive emergency preparedness and response capacity as part of the overall harmonization process. This will encompass advocacy, media and program interventions, which will range from partner-led initiatives, to working through and supporting other actors, to Oxfam International-managed interventions. Oxfam International will whenever possible work with and through local and accountable organizations in its humanitarian work, including prevention, mitigation and preparedness work, although it is recognized that this is not always or at each stage possible or appropriate. All interventions will be assessed against the ability to deliver against Sphere minimum standards, with special attention paid to issues of diversity and gender, and we commit to help to build local capacity to reach this.

6. Oxfam International commits to work in a timely, efficient and effective manner to respond to needs to the extent of our capacity, while recognizing the importance of other actors and urging them also to uphold their obligations.

7. Oxfam International commits to develop speedy and flexible decision-making mechanisms to guide emergency response employing our key strengths (through joint fundraising, media, advocacy and programming) that optimize additionality and effectiveness.

¹ Oxfam International defines as emergencies situations of conflict, ongoing insecurity and natural disaster where there is exceptional and wide-spread threat to life, health and basic subsistence, which is beyond the coping capacity of individuals and the community.

8.Oxfam International commits to building systems of information collection and dissemination that can respond to the needs of all affiliates to demonstrate accountability to donors, public, partners and beneficiaries.

9.Oxfam International, using its membership of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and other strategic alliances with humanitarian actors, will strive to improve and enrich international humanitarian response. Oxfam International commits itself to maintaining active contact with other key players working in emergencies, e.g. the UN, in order to further coordination of humanitarian effort and to influence the policies and practices of others.

10.All Oxfam International affiliates commit to a process of continuous learning throughout their agencies from their own and each other's experience and on international humanitarian law, principles and issues. They will also ensure that all staff and board members will have knowledge of and commitment to this contract as reflected in individual agency policies.