

# COPENHAGEN COMMUNIQUÉ

## OXFAM EDUCATION AND INEQUALITY INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

1-4 NOVEMBER 2016



*The participants in the workshop, photo: Lotte Ærsøe*

The 4-days international Education and Inequality workshop succeeded with achieving its aim to establish a firm and coherent foundation for spearheading Oxfam's work on education and inequality through enhancing the linkages between programme and influencing work across national, regional and global levels. The Copenhagen workshop brought together 35 Oxfam staff across programs, policy and campaigns in more than 15 countries, representing 6 regions and work at global level, and 8 affiliates.

### Four Key Decisions to which we will commit ourselves:

1. Strengthen transformative public education for all to fight inequality in all its forms
2. Prioritize a closer link to the Even it Up Campaign, fiscal justice and pro-poor spending and to policies on education financing for free public quality education.
3. Enhance cooperation and links with Gender programmes and campaigns, work on active citizenship, in close cooperation with the Youth & Active Citizens initiative and interventions in humanitarian and fragile situations
4. Establish a community of practice & influence on education to realize the change potential of education

The participation of the Global Programme Director, Franc Cortada; the Head of Inequality Policy, Max Lawson; the Head of Even It Up, Deepak Xavier; and Katie Malouf, Policy Adviser, contributed

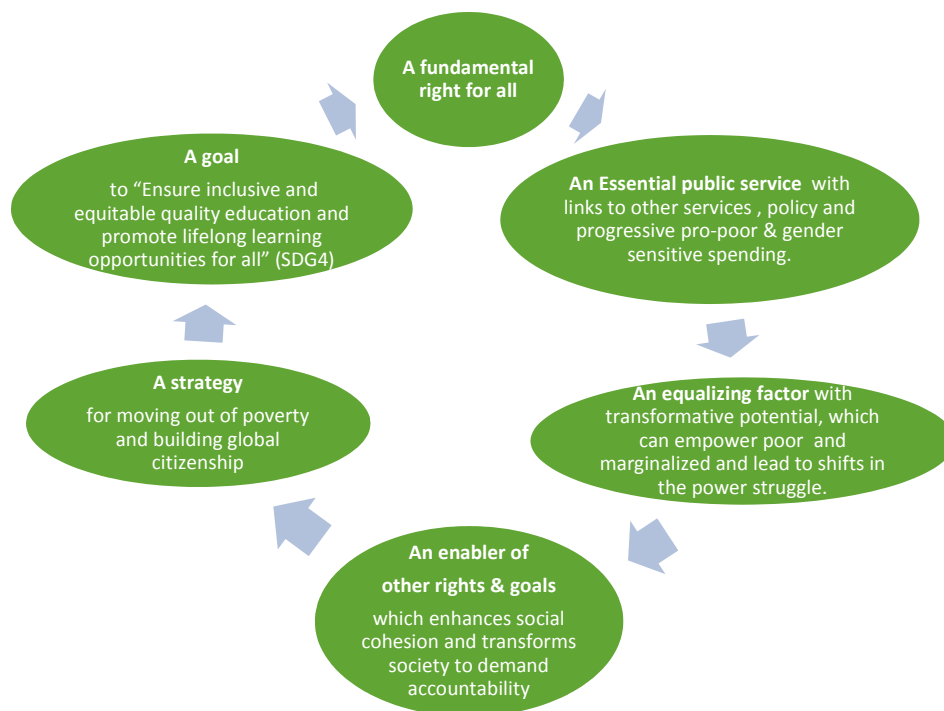
to adding the global policy dimension and link to the inequality agenda at the meeting. The participation of the CEO of Oxfam, Winnie Byanyima, on the last day enriched our discussions about the future directions of education work in Oxfam and highlighted the role of education in Oxfam.

**We defined Oxfam’s goal on education: Strengthening transformative public education for all to fight inequality.** To achieve this goal Oxfam will promote education which ensures that learners (children, youth and adults; especially girls and women); know about their rights and practice critical thinking; are empowered to use their voice in dialogue and decision making concerning their own lives and their society; are able to challenge harmful gender norms; and capacitate them to organize around issues of economic and social injustice, inequality and discrimination. This transformative education is a powerful weapon to fight all forms of inequality, especially gender, economic and social inequality.

**The Oxfam Global Programme Director, Franc Cortada highlighted the important shift in Oxfam away from looking at education as a stand alone service to education as a driver of social and economic change.** He confirmed the understanding of education as political. It matters what kind of education is enhanced, for what purpose and with what content, who delivers education (well trained or untrained teachers) and for whom (the elite or all). We realised that education is part of the inequality agenda beyond the financial aspect and the importance of establishing the links between quality education and active citizenship. Furthermore, education can contribute to transformational change and be an equalizing factor, if it is free and of good quality.

**A global alliance on inequality is being formed** and it is necessary to extend the view on the EIU campaign beyond economic inequality to include political, cultural and social inequality, including gender inequality. The EIU-campaign will spend 35% of its resources in shifting the terms of the debate on inequality and 60% on fiscal justice linking tax to public spending and public services. This calls for a sharper focus on education as a means to fight inequality, resource mobilization at national levels, and better education policies and advocating against commercialization of education.

**We explored the different dimensions of education to arrive at the roles of education:**



**The three major ways in which education fights inequality were clearly brought out by the Head of Inequality Policy, Max Lawson, as follows:**

- 1) Education is directly redistributive as it brings virtual capital in the hands of the poor and marginalized;
- 2) Education builds social mobility; and
- 3) Education catalyzes political mobilization and active citizenship.

In our influencing work we will employ many strategies, including using human rights law, working with media, developing research, and working in alliances with rapid response campaigning.

**We shared our experiences of education programming and influencing work at country and regional levels in Oxfam, and gained deeper insights into quality education and education financing & policy.**

On the quality theme we were inspired by '*Quality educators for All in Mali*', '*Promoting Multi-Lingual Education in Tribal Belts in India*', '*Education for Active Citizenship in Ghana*' and '*Engaging Youth through Education in UK*'. On the theme of Education Financing and Policy, we learnt about '*Oil revenues and tax for education in Ghana*'; '*Gender responsive budgeting in Pakistan*'; '*Education, Inequalities and the Strategy of Influence in Bolivia*'; and '*Taking policies to practice & building capacity of the education system in South Sudan*'. The synthesis of learning from the eight shared experiences, enriched by experiences from the other participants, formed the emerging picture of education in Oxfam. A comprehensive mapping of education in Oxfam will be done after the meeting. Some of the experiences together with similar case studies are available online at [www.oxfamibis.org/copenhagen\\_education\\_workshop](http://www.oxfamibis.org/copenhagen_education_workshop)

**The global trends in education were identified by David Archer, Board member of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE).** We celebrated the victory of the SDG4, especially the importance of getting a broad goal with targets from early childhood to adult education and the underlining of "free" education. The Global education movement, including Oxfam and other allies, played an important role in achieving this goal. Delivering on SDG4 requires influencing work on many fronts, often within a shrinking space for CSOs and criminalization of dissent. The failure to invest in free public education leads to poor education quality. It also undermines confidence in public education while accelerating the privatization of education.

**We agreed to resist the push for simplistic 'learning outcomes' and measurement of education quality through a narrow focus on testing, and instead push for high quality cost-effective publicly funded models that can critically challenge privatisation.** We will continue to address the critical issue of a \$39 billion annual resource gap and advocate for the 6% of GDP and 20% of national budget to quality education favoring equity and link to our tax justice work by connecting education and tax campaigns. The rise of "low fee" private schools (LFPS) also raises quality concerns due to poorly trained teachers, use of scripted lessons, extraction of profit, and the lack of regulation. Fees are unaffordable for the poorest families and have a disproportionate impact on girls. Private Public Partnerships (PPPs) are a 'quick fix' with negative long term systemic impact and failure to build sustainable public institutions for the future. We agreed that the only sustainable alternative to privatisation is to transform public education through sustained financial commitments to free, public education investments in quality and accountability promoted through community participation, budget transparency and tax justice.

**We determined that the changing aid architecture promotes aid for self-interest, and commercial and security interest, which makes bilateral aid increasingly problematic and ideological.** Within this context the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) replenishment in 2017 was identified as a big opportunity for increasing finance to quality education and policy at national level. Oxfam will use this opportunity to advocate for increased financing of education under the coordination of GCE.

**The importance of revamping the education narrative in Oxfam into leveraging education, by establishing closer links with other groups, themes and campaigns was a clear result of the analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in Oxfam's work in education.** The analysis was

enriched by brief interventions on how to ensure better integration of gender, the regional perspective and WIN, using the SDG4 as an example of successful influencing work at multiple levels, working in alliances and based on evidence generated at national level. Franc Cortada added a global programme perspective to the analysis: 40% of the Oxfam's work on Goal 6 is about tax and only 5% about essential services, so stand alone education is small, but in a broader context of fiscal justice and linked to Rights in Crisis and Gender Justice, for example, there are multiple opportunities for working with education.

**We worked on key issues and priorities for joint action and got inspired by the Head of Even It Up (EIU), Deepak Xavier who presented how the EIU campaign works to break the inequality cycle.** We learnt about the priorities for the EIU campaign 2017-2019 and rebalancing the campaign to focus more on changes in the global South. We were encouraged to take co- ownership of the EIU campaign and urged to work with other issue teams and synergies between FAIR (Fiscal Accountability for Inequality Reduction programme) and EIU, for example, to make sure education is imbedded in their strategies. We gained insights into the work of existing thematic groups in Oxfam, including YAC, aiming at strengthening Oxfam's work on Youth; the Education Policy Group under EIU working towards influencing the agenda on education and health and Oxfam IBIS Global Education Group (GEG). We identified the ways in which Oxfam adds value on education:

#### Oxfam added value on education

1. Linking tax justice with progressive spending, e.g. on free public transformative education
2. Pushing policies to promote quality and equity at national/regional and global levels and monitoring their implementation
3. Strengthening the Education For All (EFA) movements at all levels and putting their voice at the forefront
4. Shifting the terms of the debate and challenging the global debates on education
5. Fighting privatisation of essential services at national, regional and global levels
6. Unleashing the potentials of linking the levels in WIN - local to global and vice versa

**The workshop was concluded by a session with the CEO of Oxfam, Winnie Byanyima, who engaged in a dialogue with the participants about the priorities and added value of education in Oxfam.** She explained how the inequality agenda has brought back and reinforced the importance of education in Oxfam. She stressed the need to develop a strong education package in all aspects and challenge privatization by providing critical solutions to the issue of education access and quality. Accountability, gender and active citizenship were highlighted as key elements and priorities in such a package. She also stressed the need for mapping and documenting education cases in Oxfam and developing a common Theory of Change. She encouraged the group to engage in the mid-term evaluation of the OPS in March 2017 to ensure integration of education and supported the establishment of a community of learning on education.

**The immediate next steps after the 4 days workshop** include the drafting of the TOR of the Steering Group, which is co-led by Oxfam IBIS and Katie Malouf, Policy Adviser, and initially has eight members; Carolina Enriquez, Regional Programme Manager Latin America (Oxfam America), Jairo Valle, Education and Governance Programme Manager (Oxfam IBIS Nicaragua), Zakaria Sulemana, Education Director (Oxfam IBIS Ghana), Sanne Müller, Education Adviser, (Oxfam IBIS Denmark), Zeeshan Siddique, Programme Manager Gender Justice (Oxfam GB Pakistan), Katie Malouf, Policy Adviser (Oxfam Int.), Paul Langley, Head of Education and Youth (Oxfam GB UK) and Esther Varela, Advocacy Lead in Global Citizenship Education Unit (Oxfam Intermón).

Thanks to participants for their valuable contributions and ideas, for their active participation and commitment to strengthen education in Oxfam. To quote one of the participants " *There will always be a before and after Copenhagen and the journey continues from here*".

Copenhagen, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016. For queries please contact Sanne Muller: [sm@oxfamibis.dk](mailto:sm@oxfamibis.dk)