Adama Coulibaly

Global Development and Humanitarian Executive

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Profile

Humanitarian and development executive with over 30 years of experience, from field engineering and country operations to regional and global leadership. Global Programs Director at Oxfam International, overseeing a €600m+ portfolio across four regions. Previous leadership roles with UNICEF, IRC and Plan International, including 23 years with Plan. Experience combines organisational reform, funding growth, financial stewardship and leadership through crises. Work on localisation, decolonisation and gender justice is grounded in supporting country leaders, equitable partnerships and accountability to communities.

Experience

Global Programs Director

Oxfam International | Nairobi, Kenya | May 2023 to present

Lead programme direction across four regions, connecting humanitarian action, development and influencing within a €600m+ portfolio. Oversee Regional Directors and global functions spanning humanitarian response, security and duty of care, institutional funding, knowledge and learning, and programme change.

- Established and now chair the Country Directors Forum, giving country leadership a direct voice in confederation decisions.
- Led design work on a distributed secretariat and shared leadership arrangements as part of Oxfam's organisational reform.
- Guide programme quality, evidence and learning across regions, and lead Oxfam's engagement in the Pledge for Change on equitable partnerships and locally led action.
- Represent Oxfam in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Deputies Group and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification High-Level Executive Committee.

Country Director

International Rescue Committee | Democratic Republic of the Congo | Oct 2021 to Apr 2023

Led multi-sector programmes and operations in a conflict-affected setting, accountable for programme quality, resources, staff safety, and government and donor relations.

- Developed the 2022–2024 country strategy and a multi-year resource mobilisation and donor engagement plan.
- Elected to represent more than 130 INGOs in the Humanitarian Country Team, advocating on access, protection and localisation.
- Led the management of two staff kidnapping incidents, including negotiations for release and support following their return.

Principal Adviser for the Sahel

UNICEF (D1) | Dakar, Senegal | Aug 2020 to Sep 2021

- Led development of UNICEF's first Sahel Narrative across 10 countries, linking humanitarian, development and peacebuilding priorities for children.
- Served as focal point for the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. Worked with UNDP, FAO, and WFP on joint offers for climate resilience, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy, and established support and monitoring arrangements linking country offices, the region, and headquarters.

Regional Director West and Central Africa

Oxfam International | Dakar, Senegal | Oct 2016 to Jul 2020

Directed 12 country programmes, approximately 1,000 staff and a US$120m annual portfolio. Line-managed 12 Country Directors and five Regional Managers.

- Led the One Oxfam transition across all 12 countries, aligning country strategies, operating models and reward frameworks, and establishing the regional hub.
- Led the Lake Chad Basin humanitarian response, reaching approximately 470,000 people with water, sanitation, food and protection services.
- Built the ECOWAS partnership with FAO and IISD, establishing a parliamentary network on gender equality and investment in agriculture and food security.
- Led the regional response to the 2018 safeguarding crisis and developed a security audit tool subsequently adopted across Oxfam globally.

Regional Director West and Central Africa

Plan International | Dakar, Senegal | Feb 2011 to Sep 2016

Led 14 country programmes and approximately 2,000 staff. Grew the annual portfolio from US$110m to approximately US$230m.

- Established regional account management for the Global Fund, increasing signed contracts from US$50m to more than US$200m. Led the opening of programmes in Nigeria and the Central African Republic.
- Led the regional Ebola response in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, supported by more than US$50m in funding.
- Introduced child welfare outcome indicators and a regional dashboard. Developed country performance measures covering programmes, finance, grants and people management, later adapted for global use.
- Created a leadership development programme for more than 20 middle managers. Over half progressed to Country Director or Deputy Country Director roles, including in other organisations.

Country Director

Plan International | Lomé, Togo | Sep 2008 to Jan 2011

- Grew the annual budget from US$7m to US$22m and secured a €27.5m Global Fund malaria grant. Expanded savings groups from 3,000 to 23,000 members, 85% of them women.

Earlier roles with Plan International

Regional Finance Manager | Dakar, Senegal | Jul 2007 to Aug 2008
Regional Administrator | Dakar, Senegal | Aug 2004 to Jun 2007
Executive Regional Office Manager | Dakar, Senegal | Sep 2002 to Jul 2004
Operations Support Manager | Guinea | Apr 2000 to Aug 2002
Country Administrator | Guinea | Apr 1999 to Mar 2000
Engineer Technical Adviser | Guinea and Guinea-Bissau | Nov 1993 to Mar 1999

Education and professional development

Global MBA in Project Management with Merit | London Metropolitan University, UK | 2016
Diplôme d'Ingénieur de l'Équipement Rural | EIER, now 2iE, Burkina Faso | 1993
Business Economics Programme | University of Oxford, UK | 2009
Certified Professional Coach in Transformative Coaching | Coach Masters Academy | 2021

Languages and publication

English and French fluent | Bambara and Mandinka native
Author of L'Odyssée du Leadership: 24 leçons pratiques tirées d'expériences vécues. L'Harmattan, 2024.