IMPROVING SAFEGUARDING AT OXFAM

Progress May 2019 and planned actions

In February 2018, the British newspaper The Times reported on a case of sexual misconduct by Oxfam GB aid workers in Haiti that occurred during its aid operation following the 2010 earthquake. Oxfam apologized for what had taken place and acknowledged its failure to put in place the right steps, processes and culture to protect the people we were created to serve and our own staff and volunteers.

From 2011, we began to make improvements to our safeguarding practices, and we’ve accelerated our efforts since then. In October 2017, we set up a taskforce of senior leaders to lead on structural changes. On 16 February 2018, Oxfam’s board of international directors agreed to a Ten-Point Action Plan to transform our safeguarding policies, practices and our working culture.

This document summarises the progress that has been made from February 2018 until May 2019. It also outlines the planned actions to make further improvements.

1. IMPROVEMENT OF OUR SAFEGUARDING AND SUPPORTING POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

Safeguarding

- Oxfam established new Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Reporting Misconduct which has resulted in improved timeliness and consistency of reporting on misconduct.
- New reporting and whistleblowing systems such as emails, hot-lines and websites, are in place and have been widely communicated across Oxfam.
- In case management, safeguarding teams aim to routinely make first contact with a complainant within 24 hours of receiving an allegation.
- Oxfam reports externally every 6 months on reported cases of misconduct across the confederation.
- Oxfam is now using new harmonised One Oxfam policies on Child Safeguarding, Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- Oxfam’s affiliates and country teams have worked to ensure that its programs and safeguarding approaches are managed in a way that keeps people safe as we as comply with the laws and regulations of all the countries where it operates and with donor and regulator requirements.
- Oxfam has trained Country Focal Points in all its program countries and has conducted a training program on safeguarding for the Country directors in the Horn, East and Central Africa (HECA) region, and will intensify it further with a first focus on country and regional leadership.

Supporting policies and procedures

- Oxfam has a stronger system in place now for checking and providing references and is trying to ensure that Oxfam references are not given to offenders seeking jobs elsewhere. Oxfam has agreed in principal to adopt the SCHR Inter-Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, developed by nine of the world’s leading humanitarian organizations, as standard for referencing where this is legal.
- Oxfam has developed a One Oxfam policy on Sexual Diversity and Gender Identity across its confederation.
• All staff are required to sign a new Code of Conduct, to discuss its meaning and relevance in group conversations, and to take a compulsory training on Gender Justice.

• All new staff receive an introduction to safeguarding and completes an online safeguarding training course so that everyone understands Oxfam’s Code of Conduct and core values.

• All affiliates, regions and countries are now using Oxfam’s safer recruitment measures including using World Check to detect if an individual has a history of misconduct or fraudulent activity.

• Oxfam’s online training system has allowed for more comprehensive, detailed and continuous reports on safeguarding training take up.

• Oxfam holds staff accountable for demonstrating an enabling behaviour, building relationships and mutual accountability.

• Oxfam has new global ethical content guidelines to ensure that the rights of people in our photos and videos are upheld in the process of gathering, managing and using personal testimony in communications.

Planned actions for improvement

• We are continuously reviewing our Policies and Procedures to learn and make further improvements.

• Over the course of 2019-20, Oxfam will establish a single case management system which will operate across the whole of Oxfam.

• We will roll out the new Standard Operating Procedure for Case Management across the whole of Oxfam by December 31st, 2019.

• By December 31st, 2019, Oxfam will enable its teams to provide tailored support to survivors SEA.

• New One Oxfam Youth Safeguarding, Digital Safeguarding policies and a Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy will be finalised by December 31st, 2019

• Survivor support guidance will be rolled out across Oxfam.

2. INCREASED INVESTMENT AND CAPACITY IN SAFEGUARDING

• An interim Associate Director Safeguarding and Culture role has been put in place, supported by a Project Manager. A permanent Associate Director - Safeguarding is being recruited.

• All 67 Oxfam country programme teams now have a trained safeguarding focal point.

• Every Oxfam affiliate either has an expert safeguarding lead or have allocated existing staff to lead safeguarding.

• Globally, in 2018/19 Oxfam invested more than €3m into safeguarding and culture change

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1 Budget for safeguarding in 2018/19 was approx. €1m for Oxfam International and €2m for affiliates
Planned actions for improvement

- Oxfam is designing a new Global Safeguarding Shared Service which will lead safeguarding across the Oxfam confederation and coordinate action on each of the areas mentioned above. Currently half of the shared service staff are in place, and it will be fully up and running by October 2019².
- Between April 2019 and March 2020 Oxfam will invest approximately €4 million³ in safeguarding.
- Once all recruitments are done, 20-25 full time staff across Oxfam will be working on safeguarding, nearly 50% of that dedicated to the prevention work of the shared services work.

3. IMPROVEMENT OF OUR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- We established an Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change in March 2018 to review Oxfam’s culture, accountability, and safeguarding policies and practice. The Commission has been tasked with proposing recommendations on how Oxfam can better align with its values and strengthen its systems to prevent and respond to all forms of abuse of power, harassment, and interpersonal misconduct, including sexual misconduct, by anyone involved with Oxfam. The final report will be released in June 2019
- Oxfam’s leaders and managers around the world shared the Independent Commission’s interim findings with their teams to reflect and discuss new ways of working.
- Oxfam affiliates have all reached out to the public, supporters, donors and other external stakeholders in their own markets, issuing timely progress reports and updates on social media and affiliate websites.
- Oxfam has conducted public surveys globally to learn what the public expects from us and what changes we need to make to earn back trust. This information is now being used to rebuild trust with the audiences.
- Oxfam is regularly using the opportunities of public fora and debate to discuss safeguarding issues, responding to feedback directly from the public and demonstrating the progress that we are making.
- Oxfam countries and affiliates have reported all relevant case and other information to national authorities and donors as required.

Planned actions for improvement

- Oxfam will publish its approved safeguarding policies on its’ website and publish others as they are completed.
- Oxfam will continue to publish quarterly progress updates against the 10 Points Plan on safeguarding and the 6 months case data reports.

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² In 2019 the design of the Safeguarding Shared Service will be finalized and implemented. After completion, due date October, the service will run on 13 FTEs. In 2020 it will grow to full maturity.

The following services will be provided: Oversee survivor support mechanisms; Develop, socialize, improve and monitor policies and procedures; Manage a global single case management system; Ensure training and capacity development is delivered for staff and partners; Ensure information for in- and external reporting on safeguarding

Currently some of these services – like training, policies and reporting - are already provided by the network of safeguarding experts and leads throughout the confederation and in the OI Secretariat. This network had two face to face meetings during April and May 2019 and is working closely together.

³ In 2019/20, made up of Oxfam International, for Oxfam affiliates and regions, and Global Humanitarian Team (including income from the Oxfam GB legacy)
4. CHANGING OUR CULTURE AND CREATING AWARENESS

- A strategy was agreed in January 2018 to strengthen Oxfam’s culture and working environment so that all staff will feel safe and supported to reflect our values in their work.
- Approximately 4000 (of 10000 total) staff responded to the confederation-wide ‘Culture Survey’. The outcomes have created a better understanding of the critical elements of the enabling environment of misconduct and are informing reflections, dialogues and actions across the confederation. The survey was co-developed and co-owned by a group of staff that volunteered to actively contribute to strengthen Oxfam’s culture.
- This staff group is also promoting staff well-being and grounding feminist principles across our culture change work.
- Oxfam is embedding the values strongly in the different steps of the employee life cycle, making it a critical element of the recruitment process. Induction on values is strengthened and the performance management has been adapted focusing now much more on the how and not only on the what in relation to objectives.
- Oxfam has strengthened the knowledge and awareness of Oxfam’s Code of Conduct and Values by asking staff to re-sign the Code of Conduct and by organising workshops on the Code of Conduct and the Values. An online version of this workshop is available for new staff and part of the new mandatory induction program.
- Various affiliates and country teams have staff groups focussing on culture and gender mainstreaming and on other value related topics such as LGBTQ+ and race.
- Oxfam’s Gender Justice Platform has finalized a reference guide that explores key concepts and advises on reflective practice, including amplifying the scope and application of feminist thinking in all of Oxfam’s work.

Planned actions for improvement

- Oxfam International is planning to invest €403,000 globally in culture change between April 2019 and March 2020, creating new roles.
- A wellbeing and mental health framework is being designed with support of staff groups.
- The next staff satisfaction survey is planned to take place by March 31st, 2020 combining follow up on culture and general staff satisfaction. Besides a global survey more specific pulse surveys will be done providing real time information on specific relevant topics.
- HR will fast track wider access to initiatives around wellbeing and work-life balance, including counselling services.
- 360-degree feedback will be an integral part of the performance review for Oxfam leaders such as Executive Directors, and global Management Teams.

5. SAFER PROGRAMMING APPROACH

- Oxfam is improving survivor support mechanisms through ensuring we have established relationships with local referral services. In addition, Oxfam affiliates have expanded or set up mechanisms that include counselling, psychosocial support and medical aid.
- Oxfam has carried out an integrity survey with its partners and over 400 partners responded. Of these around 90% of them has zero-tolerance against sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and more than 80% has a code of conduct. We are urgently working with those who are yet to confirm to the required standards.
Oxfam’s regional and country offices are working to ensure that our partners understand and conform to our safeguarding policies, procedures, and reporting requirements prioritising those who play the biggest role in delivering programs.

An audit of Oxfam has identified several areas for improvement against sector-wide Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) for humanitarian response (see Summary Report).

Oxfam’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) teams are building capacities and conducting trainings to incorporate a safe response and manage risk within MEL processes.

Oxfam focuses on local partnerships with women’s rights movements, so that we can learn and support them in return.

Planned actions for improvement

- Oxfam is developing a short practical Safe Programming Toolkit in four languages and introducing a ‘safe programming’ leadership training for key humanitarian staff.
- Program Quality digital tools now incorporate safeguarding and ethical working and will be in use by all new staff and partners by 31st March, 2020.
- Oxfam is establishing a fund to support the capacity and capability of local partners in safeguarding and other areas of integrity such as financial management which will be designed to benefit the whole sector.
- Oxfam is using its experience in humanitarian responses relating to protection and safe programming to improve approaches in long term development programming.

6. COLLABORATING WITH OTHERS

Oxfam staff are members of various INGO and national cross-sector working groups around the world, including government and donor led initiatives. Oxfam is closely working with institutions like World Bank, Rockefeller Foundation, UN Women in the US, ACFID and DFAT in Australia, VENRO in Germany, in the UK with BOND, in Ireland with Dochas Safeguarding Group, in Italy with the Italian Agency for International Cooperation, in Belgium with CHS Alliance and in Denmark with Global Fokus, and finally with regulator Toezichthouder Goede Doelen and PARTOS in the Netherlands.

In country programmes in Africa, Latin America, Middle East and Asia, Oxfam is closely working with the wider sector, its local partners and communities to strengthen and spread awareness about safeguarding best practices.

Planned actions for improvement

- Working with others in the sector, Oxfam is collaborating in the development of a Humanitarian ID system (Passport Initiative) whereby misconduct will be recorded and made available to an individual’s future employers.
- We are also working with other agencies on the ‘Misconduct Disclosure Scheme’, a referencing system, leading specifically on the legal work and its basic features.

Note: To know more about the progress, please visit www.oxfam.org. All stated facts and figures are as on May 2019.

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