



December 2019

IMPROVING SAFEGUARDING AND CULTURE AT OXFAM

INTRODUCTION

I became Oxfam International's Interim Executive Director in November this year. My highest priority is to ensure that Oxfam continues to forge ahead with the improvements it is making to its safeguarding and culture. Oxfam is committed to achieving zero tolerance for inaction over sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse in its system. We will do everything in our power to prevent it from happening and to address it rigorously when it occurs. We have improved but we have a lot more to do.

In June this year, we received the findings of the UK Charity Commission. Oxfam Great Britain is working to give effect to all of its requirements. That same month, we also accepted the recommendation of the Independent Commission, a panel of experts that we set up with full powers to interrogate all aspects of our culture and safeguarding, past and present. We are integrating its recommendations, alongside those from other initiatives from across the humanitarian and development aid sector, into our safeguarding and culture strategy and work plan.

This report gives a snapshot of what we have done since our last report in August and what we have planned for the coming year.

Chema Vera, Acting Oxfam International Executive Director

A NEW PLAN FOR IMPROVING SAFEGUARDING AND CULTURE AT OXFAM

Oxfam has recently developed a new "Improving Safeguarding and Culture Plan" that serves as a framework to drive Oxfam's work over the next two years. The Plan builds upon our ongoing safeguarding and culture work and is strengthened by the recommendations from both commissions. Further, in an effort to promote a sector-wide approach to safeguarding and the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), Oxfam has structured its Safeguarding and Culture Plan in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's [Plan for Accelerating Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse at Country Level](#). We have clear actions that we will phase into operation over the next two years. This new plan links our work on safeguarding, culture change, gender, our programs and Human Resources.

Our new plan summarises four strategic outcome areas:

1. Enhanced accountability and management of safeguarding investigations,
2. Safe and robust reporting,
3. Quality and accessible survivor assistance,
4. Transforming Oxfam's culture and ensuring that we live our values.

Over the past year and a half, Oxfam has taken major steps towards aligning our approach to safeguarding across Oxfam's international confederation (i.e. 19 independent affiliate members, seven regional platforms, and 67 country teams). During this time, we have delivered:



Policies and Procedures

- One-Oxfam Safeguarding Policies including a Child Safeguarding Policy and a Policy for Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment and mandatory online training for staff on these issues.
- An updated One-Oxfam Code of Conduct rolled out to all staff as part of a mandatory program about living Oxfam's values of empowerment, inclusiveness, and accountability.

Safeguarding Resources

- A significant increase in safeguarding capacity, including establishing and recruiting an Oxfam International Associate Director for Safeguarding and Safeguarding Learning and Development Lead, regional and headquarters-based safeguarding advisor posts, a learning and development advisor, and humanitarian support personnel. Together they serve as a collective resource for the entire confederation.
- Appointed and trained Safeguarding Focal Points in each of our offices across 67 countries.

Investment in Partnerships

- Support to Oxfam partners including through a new "Partnership Approach and Partnership Assessment Tool" that looks to promote the safeguarding capacity of partners by identifying strengths as well as opportunities for capacity development.
- Launched the Oxfam Integrity Fund that provides resources for capacity building support for partners and Oxfam staff on safeguarding, and also to tackle other issues related to living our values, financial management, conflict of interest, abuse of power, and corruption.

Human Resources

- Strengthened HR processes including "Safer Recruitment" guidelines, manager training, improved performance management system, and standardized mandatory induction programme,
- Sponsorship and participation in the United Nations' [Inter-Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme](#), a sector-wide initiative aimed to prevent the re-hiring of individuals who have a record of committing misconduct, including sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. Certain legal constraints, such as local data protection and privacy laws, have made implementation of the Scheme a complex process. Nonetheless within Oxfam, the Scheme is now being implemented by our affiliate members in the UK, Italy and Hong Kong. New Zealand, Quebec, the US, the Netherlands, Spain, Kenya and Ireland will begin implementation shortly.

Culture

- Recruited the Culture Lead, who will continue to deliver the Culture Strategy
- We are constantly **influencing processes and initiatives that support culture:** Feminist principles guidelines, Leadership 360 feedback, Let's talk and the Diversity and Inclusion Workgroup



While building on all this work, Oxfam is looking forward to continuing efforts to strengthen safeguarding initiatives over the next year. Several major ongoing initiatives that fall under Oxfam's new Safeguarding and Culture Plan include:

- **Enhanced accountability and management of safeguarding investigations**
 - We are in the process of developing a **One-Oxfam Case Management System** to ensure greater accountability and transparency. Oxfam currently has consolidated case data and has a common understanding of definitions and types of allegations. A common Case Management System will further support data analysis, transparency, and accountability for cases.
 - In the process of finalizing a **One-Oxfam Standard Operating Procedures for Case Management**. Oxfam has drafted Standard Operating Procedures to ensure that cases are managed consistently across the confederation. Once finalized, this tool will also support a better understanding from staff, partners, and community members about how Oxfam will respond should they report a case.
- **Safe and robust reporting.**
 - Continuation of ongoing **Safe Programming** efforts that not only include designing programmes that take safety and security of staff, partners, and community members into account, but also provide ongoing opportunities to provide feedback – including reporting of misconduct.
- **Quality and accessible survivor assistance,**
 - Development of a **Survivor Support Strategy**, that includes guidelines for providing assistance to survivors. This strategy will build upon work country teams are currently doing to collaborate with inter-agency mechanisms, such as in-country PSEA Networks and GBV and child protection sub-clusters (coordination mechanisms). It will also include further training for focal points and key staff.
- **Transforming Oxfam's culture and ensuring that we live our values.**
 - **Awareness creation:** Formed the **Living Our Values Everyday (LOVE) Network**- a staff driven initiative to discuss pertinent culture issues. Now engages over **1,200** staff
 - Active staff engagement in transforming Oxfam's culture is increasingly happening through the **LOVE network**, by new initiatives as the Community of Practice Sexual Diversity and Gender Identity
 - The **Culture Survey and Dialogue Process** is the most recent and very important step in the journey to strengthen Oxfam's culture; which is important for staff motivation and feeling of Oxfam's change towards a better place to work in. Amongst others, we have recently initiated facilitated discussions on culture in 2 complex countries (Yemen and DRC).
 - In the first year concrete interventions have been done focusing on HR policies and procedures. **First, the re-signing the code of conduct by staff** combined with **training about the values and code of conduct** ensured discussions about values and code of conduct were part of the recruitment process. Furthermore, **strengthening the performance process** by putting more **emphasis on "How we accomplish our**



tasks”, the behavior and feedback mechanism has started shifting mindsets to focus on understanding the cultural repercussions of our actions within Oxfam.

- As a global initiative “**One Oxfam Staff Wellness and Well-Being**” was organised by an established core working group that included different stakeholders across the confederation on World Mental Health Day. To drive the discussion, the initial process involved active communication engaging staff. Teams from across the confederation celebrated World Mental Health Day by successfully organising awareness sessions in many regions in English, Arabic, Spanish and French languages.
- **Supporting leaders on Diversity & Inclusion:** The Global Programs Management Team (which includes the 7 regional directors, the Global Programs Director and others) have started an externally facilitated process. The purpose of this process is to support leaders to navigate diversity in their teams and the wider organization by first looking at themselves as leaders (the self), increase diversity literacy, learn from concrete situations and together building on the values, the feminist principles, Leadership model and Gender Sexual Diversity policy.
- In 2018 Oxfam **committed to being guided by Feminist Principles**, which has shaped our culture work, our HR improvements, as well as our decision-making processes and strategic decisions in the last year. In August 2019, our Gender Justice Platform shared a list of guiding feminist principles to support all staff to understand and implement their work through a feminist principles lens.
- **Our Oxfam Global Strategy** process has also been **guided by feminist principles**, with a purposeful collective and diverse process aimed at redressing power imbalance at the core of strategy development.



SAFEGUARDING DATA FOR THE PERIOD APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2019

Over the past few years and especially since February 2018, Oxfam has encouraged its approximately 10,000 staff, 50,000 volunteers, 3,000 partner organizations and millions of people it works with in communities in 70 countries across the world, to speak out and report concerns and incidents affecting them, even when the incident took place in the past. At the same time, Oxfam is improving and increasing its capacity to support survivors and deal with cases as they arise.

Oxfam is committed to further improving our case and data management capacity to support reporting both internally and in collaboration with the wider sector. Oxfam has adopted commonly used definitions, including safeguarding terminology used by the United Nations.

Oxfam streamlined its confederation-wide case data collection through a central global database, which now contains all information reported from April 2018¹.

The volume of cases reported has risen significantly, which we consider to be a positive development that reflects an improvement in our systems and processes in that people are increasingly understanding their rights and know where and how to report. We would expect case numbers to continue to rise and that a greater proportion would come from partners and community members as their understanding of their rights, how to report and trust that Oxfam will follow up appropriately, grows over time.

The last case data report was for the period ending March 2019. At that time, the confederation reported a total of 294 cases (221 closed and 73 open). At the end of September 2019, 383 cases were recorded on the register. Of these, 317 cases were closed, and 66 have been carried forward as open cases.

Cases reported for the period April – September 2019

There was a total of 89 new cases registered during the period of April to September 2019. (Total of 383 cases at the end of September, minus 294 cases at the end of March 2019)

Closed Cases

Closed cases are those where an allegation has been reviewed, investigated where necessary, and an outcome reached and acted upon. There are some closed cases which include instances where the case was not upheld or did not proceed because a survivor did not wish to continue.

Between 1st April 2019 and 30th September 2019, Oxfam closed 96 global safeguarding cases (this included cases which had been registered prior to April 2019).

The 96 closed cases² included:

- 8 cases of alleged sexual abuse (8%);
- 13 cases of alleged exploitation, including actions such as paying for sex (14%);
- 40 cases of alleged sexual harassment (42%);

¹ Some affiliates have included information from 1992 onwards, which was reported to the OI database from 2018 onwards.

² Closed cases include those where the allegation was not upheld, therefore we cannot consider them all perpetrators, but rather alleged).



- 34 cases of other internal alleged reportable issues such as bullying or other inappropriate conduct; sexual or romantic relationship against the code of conduct and conflict of interest policy; non-sexual child abuse such as physical, emotional, neglect, or other non-sexual harm to an under 18 (35%);
- 1 case was other/not identified; 1%

A breakdown of the 96 closed cases show that the survivors were made up of:

- 7 beneficiaries (7%);
- 10 non-beneficiaries, i.e. community member not directly receiving Oxfam assistance (10%);
- 10 volunteers (10%);
- 7 children: 2 beneficiaries; 4 non-beneficiaries; 1 volunteer (8%);
- 5 Partner staff (5%);
- 42 non-managerial staff (44%);
- 2 managerial staff (2%);
- 13 unknown victim (13%).

Of the 96 closed cases, the Subject of Complaint (Alleged Perpetrator) is made up of:

- 29 managerial staff (30%)
- 42 non-managerial staff (44%)
- 4 non-staff, including contractors and consultants (4%)
- 5 volunteers (5%)
- 10 partner staff (11%)
- 3 non-beneficiaries (3%)
- 3 cases where Subject of Complaint not determined (3%)

Of the 96 closed cases, 86 cases were investigated, and action taken. In 10 instances the complainant did not wish to go forward to an investigation. The outcomes were:

- 47 cases upheld (49%), resulting in:
 - 11 dismissals
 - 20 disciplinary action
 - 16 non-disciplinary action e.g. training on safeguarding and code of conduct
- 3 cases: resignation of the Subject of Complaint after the allegation was raised. One was investigated and two were subject to disciplinary action (3%)
- 31 cases were not upheld (32%)
 - 20 insufficient evidence
 - 11 not upheld
- 10 cases (11%) the complainant did not wish to proceed with the investigation and case could not be taken forward.
- 5 cases (5%) referred elsewhere, as it was later identified as the allegation was not related to safeguarding.

Oxfam offers and provides support to survivors through all steps of the investigation, including from when an incident is reported, during and after the investigation of the case and even when an investigation does not take place. This support can include counselling, health care and legal support as required and wherever available.

**Open cases**

At the end of September 2019, Oxfam continues to investigate 66 open cases.

Given that Oxfam is taking a survivor centered approach, some investigations take additional time to ensure that they are conducted safely and at a pace that survivors are comfortable with. Oxfam is committed to supporting survivors and remains committed to creating a culture of zero tolerance, to do all we can to prevent abuse and exploitation, and to encourage people to come forward to report their concerns.

ENDS