



## IMPROVING SAFEGUARDING AND CULTURE AT OXFAM

### Introduction

Oxfam has developed an “Improving Safeguarding and Culture Plan” to drive its work over the next two years. The Plan builds upon our ongoing work and is strengthened by the recommendations from both the Independent and Charity Commission reports. It aims to align our approach to safeguarding across Oxfam’s international confederation (i.e. 20 independent affiliate members, seven regional platforms, and 66 country teams). It links our work on safeguarding, culture change, gender, programs and Human Resources, within an improved governance framework.

Over October 2019 to March 2020, Oxfam continued to deliver to these commitments. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has impacted on plans, with attention diverted to a humanitarian, programmatic and influencing response of global proportions. There are significant modifications in the delivery of programmes, working environments and business operations. Oxfam is acting fast to adapt to this new context.

The coronavirus outbreak has brought unprecedented changes for individuals, families and communities. The risks related to sexual exploitation and abuse are heightened in the face of stress, fear, economic uncertainty and chaotic environments. At the same time, the barriers to reporting and responding have also increased. In response, Oxfam has created a number of additional tools for staff and partners and we have been working in collaboration with interagency mechanisms to support and deliver best practice initiatives in these unique circumstances.

Highlights of our work over period from October 2019 until March 2020 include:

### Safeguarding

- **Oxfam’s Safeguarding Shared Service now includes 33 safeguarding positions and 182 trained focal points at country level.** This shared service brings together safeguarding expertise from across the Oxfam confederation. Training for Country Focal Points was done throughout 2019. In 2020, a new training module was developed and has been piloted in one region.
- **To improve the quality and consistency of case data collection, reporting and analysis, Oxfam has developed a Global Case Management System for safeguarding and financial misconduct.** This system will also allow for strengthened data analysis and oversight across the confederation. The system is now configured and is in the testing phase. It will be rolled out across the confederation by the end of June 2020.
- **A range of policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) documents are now available for consistent application of safeguarding across the confederation.** These documents include the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy, the One Oxfam Child Safeguarding Policy and the Reporting Misconduct SOP (currently being reviewed to bring it up to date). Recent approved documents are the Digital Safeguarding Policy, the Youth Safeguarding Policy and the One Oxfam Case Management SOP. **Safeguarding Core (Minimum) Standards have been drafted, and are being piloted in some countries, prior to being rolled out more widely.**
- **Individual affiliates have rolled out additional policies and procedures, including a Survivor Support Policy.** Experience implementing these additional policies within affiliates will support the further development of the One Oxfam’s Survivor Support Strategy and guidelines.



- **To improve safeguarding across the sector, Oxfam plays a key role in inter-agency coordination mechanisms** including IASC, Australia's INGO peak body ACFID's Safeguarding Community of Practice, local PSEA Networks, protection / GBV clusters, etc.
- **Oxfam has a “zero-tolerance to inaction” approach to safeguarding-related allegations, meaning that we take all necessary and appropriate steps to respond to and investigate allegations.** A strengthened safeguarding definitions and categories document has been developed to support more consistent reporting and case management. Oxfam continues to collect, collate and analyze confederation wide case data every three months and, to promote transparency, publishes case data every six months.
- **Oxfam is quickly adapting its approach to the context of Coronavirus.** Guidance and support are provided on the risks in the new context and how to adapt risk mitigation plans. Online training resources are made available to continue the training of support teams with safeguarding responsibilities. Oxfam is engaged in Inter-agency discussions on safeguarding investigation processes, challenges and risks under the coronavirus outbreak. A sector-wide briefing note on case management is being drafted to support safeguarding teams, and to help inform management and donors about the ways that investigations will change during the coronavirus crisis.

### Global Program

- **Oxfam is implementing a Safe Programming Strategy and Framework.** Safe Programming is a holistic ‘do no harm’ approach that brings together safeguarding, protection and other practical aspects of good programming practices. Oxfam’s GHT (Global Humanitarian Team) is leading this work, given the increased risks in humanitarian environments. The team has increased its technical expertise and has developed, tested and employed practical tools for implementing and measuring Safe Programming. A training toolkit is now available. Webinars have been held in English, French and Spanish. A total of 37 Trainers have been trained and are in the process of training others, including partners who have increased their capacity in safe programming. Work on a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework for Safe Programming has begun. Based on the work of the humanitarian team, materials, guidance and training are being developed for Safe Programming in other contexts.
- **Oxfam has improved its project risk analysis and management.** Webinars dedicated to the understanding of risk assessments have resulted in steady submissions of Safeguarding Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plans both for existing projects and for all new projects.
- **Research was carried out in Myanmar, Iraq and Ghana to understand the barriers and preferences related to reporting of misconduct, with the goal of designing community-led, context-specific feedback mechanisms.** Pilot activities to remove barriers have been created for the three countries. The outcomes of the research have been published and shared in the sector.

### Culture

- **Oxfam staff dialogues on culture are continuing with outcomes and themes being shared with Oxfam’s leadership to influence decisions.** Many of these discussions around culture are now more focused on needed ‘Care Conversations’ in the context of the coronavirus. These conversations are aimed at caring for each other, showing love, kindness and gratitude for what we have, and together developing innovative ideas to change how we work and deliver our results.
- **An initiative was launched to investigate and pilot effective ways to support Oxfam leaders to navigate culture change.** A pilot group of Oxfam leaders were interviewed



about the challenges and opportunities they face. The objective is to identify mechanisms for leaders to voice concerns and find support.

- **A diverse culture change community of practice is now giving advice and direction to the implementation of organizational changes within the confederation.** This group is supporting our work towards an inclusive, transparent, safe culture embedded in feminist principles and organizational values.
- A series of meetings have been held with Ombuds professionals to seek their views on how to integrate an Ombuds Office into the Oxfam Confederation. The Safeguarding Shared Service already fills a number of the functions of an Ombuds role and, as part of the maturity model, it was agreed that we would continue to build on this learning in order to determine the best future ecosystem to support a properly resourced Ombuds office. Similarly, we now have a Chief Ethics Officer in the largest affiliate in the confederation (Oxfam Great Britain) and the Safeguarding and Culture Task Force has regular meetings with her to determine when and how to integrate a similar position into the overall confederated structure.

## HR

- **360-degree feedback was provided to senior leaders from across the confederation to address behaviours critical for cultural reform and good people management at Oxfam:** a group of 116 leaders were assessed by their managers, peers, direct reports and other stakeholders on their leadership competencies. They participated in feedback sessions to review this feedback and to discuss their unique strengths and areas that needed further development. Follow up coaching for them has been prioritised.
- **Oxfam's Performance Management process has been refreshed and rolled out based on Oxfam Values, Feminist principles and Leadership model.** The intention of the new process is to enhance regular quality conversations between staff and managers and to bring about a better employee experience.
- **A global Diversity and Inclusion Working Group has been formed to support greater D&I at Oxfam.** During this period, the group provided regular messages and awareness raising activities using key global moments, such as Day of Persons with Disability, International Women's Day, Day for Social Justice and Elimination of Racial Discrimination). In addition, Oxfam International, Oxfam Intermon, Oxfam GB and Oxfam Australia signed up to the Fair Share Project which aims to increase women in senior positions in civil society by 2030.
- **As part of safer recruitment, Oxfam HR teams have done a refresher training on the Inter-Agency Misconduct Scheme (of which Oxfam is a founding member) and the additional training on our referencing process,** to ensure accredited referees issue references in the appropriate manner.
- **Oxfam's staff code of conduct is available in 4 different languages (English, French, Spanish and Arabic) and is a mandatory part of induction for all staff.** All staff are required to re-sign the Code of Conduct every year and trainings are held throughout the confederation to ensure that staff understand their obligations.

## Gender Justice

- **Gender Justice and feminist principles are key priorities in Oxfam's new strategy and transformation process.** Key indicators of success are being integrated into the planning of Oxfam's strategic plan to ensure that Oxfam is walking the talk on gender justice and women's rights.
- **Gender Justice is an integral part of Oxfam's global response to the coronavirus.** Our work together with our many partners will be guided by a feminist approach looking into the short-term and long-term impacts of the pandemic on women, girls, gender diverse and overall marginalized people. We will promote gender responsive governance



including women and feminist organizations at the core of the response. Oxfam is publicly campaigning on the issue, calling on governments, private sector and relevant agencies to integrate issues such as data desegregation and intersectionality, women's role in the care economy, their double work burden, sexual and reproductive health, ending violence against women and girls, single headed households, dignified work for women and safety nets, overall gender responsive policies and into the response to the pandemic.

- **An Oxfam Influencing Strategy for the Commission of the Status of Women was developed.** The strategy and side events proposed involved strong support for Southern participation and advocacy on women's rights issues, including on fight against fundamentalism, gender distribution of unpaid and underpaid work, women, peace and security (unfortunately the Commission on the Status of Women was cancelled due to the coronavirus crisis).

### Governance

- **A proposal for Oxfam's global governance reform has been prepared but final approval is delayed until October 2020 due to the extraordinary circumstances of the Coronavirus.** The review includes constitutional amendments, further clarity on the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of different governing bodies and new governance structure. A transition period will be built until April 2021.

### SAFEGUARDING DATA FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER 2019 TO MARCH 2020

Oxfam continues to encourage its approximate 10,000 staff, 50,000 volunteers, 3,000 partner organizations and millions of people it works with in communities in 66 countries, to speak out and report concerns and incidents affecting them, including when the incident itself 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 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 2018<sup>1</sup>.

The last case data report was for the period ending September 2019. At that time, the confederation reported a total of 383 cases (317 closed and 66 open). At the end of March 2020, 438 cases were recorded on the register. 415 cases were closed, and 23 have been carried forward as open cases.

### Cases reported for the period October 2019 – March 2020

There was a total of 55 new cases registered during the period October 2019 to March 2020. (Total of 438 cases at the end of March 2020, minus 383 cases at the end September 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 closed cases which include instances where the case was not upheld or did not proceed because a survivor did not want to continue.

Between 1st October 2019 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, Oxfam closed 98 global safeguarding cases (this included cases which had been registered prior to April 2019).

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



Of the 98 closed cases, 86 cases were assessed and appropriate action taken (e.g. an investigation). In 12 instances the complainant did not wish to go forward with actioning the complaint. The outcomes of actions taken were:

- 52 cases upheld (54%) resulting in:
  - 25 dismissal
  - 14 disciplinary action
  - 13 non-disciplinary action e.g. training on safeguarding and code of conduct
- 20 cases were not upheld (20%)
  - 6 insufficient evidence
  - 14 not upheld
- 12 cases the complainant did not wish to proceed with the investigation (12%)
- 1 a note to file to be included in future referencing (person resigned); (1%)<sup>2</sup>
- 6 cases referred to external authorities: (6%)
- 7 cases referred to other internal departments (e.g. HR or fraud); (7%)

The 98 closed cases included:

- 22 allegations of sexual abuse; (23%)
- 20 allegations of exploitation (including actions such as paying for sex); (20%)
- 30 allegations of sexual harassment; (30%)
- 9 allegations that involved children; (9%)
- 17 allegations of other internal reportable issues (such as bullying or other inappropriate conduct; sexual or romantic relationship against the code of conduct and conflict of interest policy); (18%)

A breakdown of the 98 closed cases show that the survivors were made up of:

- 3 Programme participants; (3%)
- 28 community members (not directly receiving Oxfam assistance); (29%)
- 21 Volunteers; (21%)
- 8 children; (8%),
- 24 Non managerial staff; (25%)
- 7 Managerial staff; (7%)
- 6 Partner personnel; (6%)
- 1 Others / unknown (e.g. watching pornography); (1%)

Of the 98 closed cases, the Subject of Complaint (Alleged Perpetrator)<sup>3</sup> is made up of:

- 6 community members; (6%)
- 17 volunteers; (17%)
- 1 non-staff (including contractors and consultants); (1%)
- 11 partner staff; (11%)
- 31 non-managerial staff; (32%)
- 32 managerial staff; (33%)

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

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<sup>2</sup> We cannot stop people resigning before investigations are completed. However, there will be a note on the persons file, and we will reflect this in references. In some cases, we have actively contacted employers if we find out a SoC has joined a new organisation somehow by passing the referencing system.

<sup>3</sup> Closed cases include those where the allegation was not upheld, therefore we cannot consider them all perpetrators... just alleged).



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 March 2020, Oxfam continues to investigate 23 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**