

Oxfam's commitment to stamping out sexual harassment and abuse

Progress on our Ten-Point Plan

The sexual misconduct by Oxfam staff in Haiti and elsewhere was a shameful failure and in my language, I say: 'Okuruga ahamutima gwangye, mutusaasire,' which means 'From the bottom of my heart I am asking for forgiveness.'

Of course, words are not enough. That's why we put in place a 10-point action plan to strengthen Oxfam's safeguarding policies and practices and transform our working culture in that light. We will do our best to stamp out exploitation, abuse and harassment from all parts of our confederation, protect those we work with, and ensure justice for survivors of abuse. This is the plan that matches our apologies and commitments with action.

We're carrying out our plan along eight different streams of work, providing a frame for how we will: improve our transparency and accountability and our policies, practices and culture; increase investment into safeguarding and training; work with other NGOs; and reform our recruitment and vetting processes.

We are publishing this web-page to show the progress we're making. We will update it every two months, including to coincide with the Independent Commission's interim report this October and its final report in May 2019.

We are determined to demonstrate to the communities we serve, to our own staff colleagues, partners and donors, and to the public supporting us, that Oxfam is an organization to be trusted. We'll never be perfect, and we'll stumble along the way, but we've committed our future on getting it right. We will continue to cooperate, listen and learn.

Oxfam International Executive Director, Winnie Byanyima

1 AN INDEPENDENT HIGH-LEVEL COMMISSION ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, ACCOUNTABILITY AND CULTURE CHANGE

Our commitment: Oxfam cannot exonerate itself from the charges made against it and will not try. We will establish a High-Level Commission to operate at arms-length from Oxfam, comprised of senior women leaders from across the world. Its Independent Chair will determine the scope of its own enquiry in consultation with the Board of Oxfam International. It will have full powers to investigate past and present cases, policies, practices and culture. It will listen to criticisms and allegations, particularly in relation to the abuse of power and sexual misconduct. It will endeavor to create a comprehensive historical record which will be made publicly available. Oxfam will be guided by whatever recommendations the Commission makes.

What we have done so far:

- On March 16, 2018, [Oxfam announced](#) the formation of the Independent Commission with Zainab Bangura, former United Nations under-secretary general, and Katherine Sierra, former World Bank vice-president, as co-chairs. They lead a team of experienced individuals from the realms of business, government and civil society.

- The Commission is working on an interim report that it will publish within six months of its start-date and a final report and recommendations within 12 months (May 2019).
- It has set up a direct email (contact@independentcommission.org) which anyone who would like to contact the Commission can use.
- The Commission has agreed its own protocols for speaking to survivors, whistle blowers, staff or concerned people who can contact Commissioners through the various channels.
- Commissioners are now talking to Oxfam Regional Directors and Country Directors about the visits to Oxfam's programmes that they are planning to make between August and October.
- The commission is contracting research using the Listening Project methodology (already used by Oxfam America and Oxfam India) to spend more time with communities to listen to their perspectives.

2 REITERATED COMMITMENT TO COLLABORATE WITH ALL RELEVANT AUTHORITIES

Our commitment: We will redouble our efforts to show transparency and full cooperation with relevant authorities in any way that can achieve justice for survivors of abuse and help to prevent any instance of abuse in the future. This includes proactively reaching out to regulators and governments in countries where we operate to offer to share any information they need or may wish to see. Our aim is to ensure authorities can again feel confident in our policies and processes, with a demonstrable commitment to transparency whilst protecting the safety and confidentiality of survivors.

What we have done so far:

- Oxfam has reiterated its commitment to do its best to comply with the laws and regulations of every country where we operate, to staff and external partners, donors and regulators.
- In relation to the Haiti case specifically, we are cooperating with authorities there, in the United Kingdom, and in the home countries of the individuals involved.
- We are cooperating with all external investigations in the UK, including the UK Charity Commission's statutory enquiry and the enquiry of the UK Parliament's Select Committee on International Development. Oxfam Great Britain's review, undertaken as part of the UK Charity Commission inquiry, is scheduled to conclude in July 2018.
- A "One Oxfam" set of policies and standard operating procedure for safeguarding cases is being developed and will be rolled out across the confederation in September/October 2018.
- Oxfam has held meetings with more than 20 institutional donors to take into account their requirements and map out how our new safeguarding standard operating procedures meet their needs.

3 RE-EXAMINE PAST CASES AND ENCOURAGE OTHER WITNESSES OR SURVIVORS TO COME FORWARD

Our commitment: We owe it to anyone who may have been affected by the misconduct of Oxfam staff to look back at previous cases and re-examine whether they were dealt with appropriately. If they were not then, insofar as is possible, we will take new action in line with Oxfam's values. This may lead to some current staff facing disciplinary action and possibly losing their jobs. We will continue to communicate to staff, volunteers, partners and beneficiaries that it

is safe and indeed actively encouraged to report any instances that they experienced or witnessed that they have previously felt unable to report or were not adequately dealt with at the time. We will ensure an effective whistle-blower system that can be easily and safely utilized by staff, volunteers and people external to Oxfam. More resources will be made available for this as needed.

What we have done so far:

- Oxfam has developed a global database of all reported verified cases of safeguarding misconduct across the confederation
- An OI External Investigation team has been appointed and begins work in July reviewing a representative proportion of historical cases of sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation across the Oxfam confederation. This work excludes Oxfam GB, whose cases have been reviewed via the UK Charity Commission.
- Oxfam has made available independent, external whistleblowing systems in five languages for reporting concerns and have publicized this to all staff.
- Oxfam has put 'Safeguarding Focal Points' in all countries where it delivers programs. These are experienced volunteer members of staff who support awareness and prevention activities and can act as initial points of contact for staff grievances.

4 INCREASE OUR INVESTMENT IN SAFEGUARDING

Our commitment: The Oxfam confederation will significantly increase investment both in budget and staffing to ensure we have appropriate resources to ensure the safety and well-being of all people who come into contact with Oxfam staff. We will also increase our investment in gender training, including recruitment of more staff who will lead our work on gender equality and empowerment in programs and humanitarian response teams.

What we've done so far:

- Oxfam has committed more than €2m in total toward funding the Independent Commission and rolling out safeguarding training across the confederation, and for new staff including an Associate Director for Safeguarding and Culture and seven regional safeguarding leads. In addition, affiliates have increased their investment in safeguarding.
- We have run certified training courses through the CHS alliance in Nairobi, Oxford, Dublin, Bangkok, Dakar Amman and Mexico to begin training up 119 staff in the skills and knowledge they need to become safeguarding investigators. Other international NGOs and partner organizations participated in some of these courses. We intend creating a pool of safeguarding investigators to work across Oxfam and the international NGO sector.

5 STRENGTHEN INTERNAL PROCESSES

Our commitment: We will improve our internal processes including to ensure that official Oxfam references are never given to offenders seeking jobs elsewhere. We will strengthen the vetting and recruitment of staff including to make safeguarding a mandatory part of the recruitment and

selection process and in performance management criteria. We will make safeguarding training mandatory for all staff. We will strengthen whistle-blowing process to ensure it is safe and easy for people to use. All Oxfam affiliates will have trained safeguarding focal points, including at all major Oxfam-organized events. We will ensure our systems are reliable in order to report any suspected illegal activity to the relevant authorities.

What we've done so far:

- We have approved a new safeguarding strategy that covers organisational culture change and guides the strengthening of our safeguarding policies and procedures.
- From October 2018, every six months Oxfam will publicly disclose consolidated global anonymized data of all the safeguarding investigations that it has closed out in that period across all members of its confederation.
- We have developed definitions of safeguarding cases that are now being embedded into a Standard Operating Procedure
- Oxfam has set up a central contact system to deal with all requests for staff references and has accredited referees in every Oxfam affiliate. Cases of gross misconduct, including sexual abuse, will be clearly marked in references where this is lawful.
- We are working on more thorough and standardized pre-employment checks for new employees both across Oxfam and across the sector.
- We are making safeguarding a mandatory part of the staff recruitment process.
- We have established a common database for the confederation that captures all reported cases for the last 10 years and is now being updated live for all new verified cases, in order to facilitate accurate and up to date reporting while ensuring confidentiality.
- We will run a two-day training workshop for safeguarding focal leads in the Horn/East Africa region in July and roll-out this training to all “high risk” countries by end of 2018, and in all seven Oxfam regions by March 2019.
- 200 staff attended an awareness-raising and safeguarding training workshop in Ethiopia in June.
- Online safeguarding training for all staff to assess the progress made in understanding and improving safeguarding will be rolled out in August/September 2018
- New safeguarding policies, procedures and practices are being developed to ensure harmonization across the confederation, while adapting to local legal contexts, including:
 - One Oxfam SHEA policy
 - One Oxfam Child safeguarding policy
 - One Oxfam survivor support policy and protocol

RE-ENFORCE A CULTURE OF ZERO TOLERANCE TOWARDS HARASSMENT, ABUSE OR EXPLOITATION

Our commitment: We will change the culture that enabled harassment, exploitation, discrimination and abuse to exist within Oxfam and help to lead this change throughout the sector. We will work with agencies to support Oxfam’s cultural shift. We will set up a Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Taskforce to make recommendations that we will act upon with urgency.

What we've done so far:

- We are actively encouraging Oxfam staff to raise any grievances with confidence through multiple channels including team discussions, regular internal updates, webinars and online forums.
- In February we rolled out an updated “One Oxfam” Code of Conduct; most staff have already signed and discussed it in team meetings.

- A range of online courses, including on gender justice and gender and power, are currently being rolled out across the confederation.
- Over 40 members of staff across the world have volunteered to participate in initiatives aiming to change the Oxfam culture, e.g. a group called “Living Our Values Everyday” has set up on Oxfam’s internal social network to encourage discussion and debate on culture change.

WORK WITH OUR PEERS ACROSS THE SECTOR TO TACKLE PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Our commitment: We will work with the rest of our sector to ensure people are safe, recognizing there are actions we cannot take on our own. This includes how to ensure that offenders who have lost their job with one organization cannot move on to another. We will work with UN bodies, the International Civil Society Center, and other joint NGO platforms to agree proposals for sector-wide improvement. We will contribute to the work initiated by BOND in the UK for a humanitarian passport and/or anti-offenders’ system housed by an accountable agency such as UN OCHA.

What we’ve done so far:

- Oxfam is in discussions with the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response and the UN to establish accrediting and passporting processes for staff across the humanitarian sector.
- Oxfam International’s chief executive addressed the World Bank Advisory Council on Gender and Development to share Oxfam’s learning and plans to bank and government ministers. She gave a similar address to the retreat of global CEOs and Chairs of our sector in April hosted by the International Civil Society Centre, and at the European Development Days in Brussels.
- Oxfam affiliates are all active in sectoral initiatives in their own countries. For example, Oxfam America’s chief executive is playing a leading role in safeguarding work among other international NGOs in the United States, including inside the Interaction alliance. Oxfam Quebec and Oxfam Canada’s chief executives have joined the new Steering Committee to Prevent and Address Sexual Misconduct alongside ten other NGO leaders, initiated by the Canadian Council for International Cooperation. Oxfam Great Britain’s chief executive discussed initiatives with other aid agencies to tackle sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation at a safeguarding summit in London on March 2018, and issued [this joint statement](#).

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH PARTNERS AND ALLIES, ESPECIALLY WOMEN’S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

Our commitment: We will reach out to partners and allies to rebuild trust including from their input on how we can learn and improve. We will reach out to women’s rights organizations and others who work on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) issues, to answer their questions, hear their reflections and concerns, and ensure our responses are defined in consultation with them.

What we’ve done so far:

- We are discussing ethical and safeguarding standards with many of our partner organizations. This includes our expectations for how they'll protect their own staff and stakeholders against misconduct, how they'll report cases, and what they'll do to protect survivors, including designing safe whistleblower hotlines.
- We have designed a survey to ascertain what partners have in place relating to safeguarding, fraud and community feedback.
- We have been sharing updates on our response and answering questions from partners and allies worldwide, including many women's rights organizations.

9 LISTEN TO THE PUBLIC

Our commitment: We will listen and learn from feedback from supporters around the world. We will ensure two-way communication with them, responding to the concerns they raise and explaining the actions we are taken to learn and change.

What we've done so far:

- We've received a huge number of messages, both critical and encouraging, from the public over the last months. We're working hard to get back to people personally and we're keeping records of what people are telling us.
- Oxfam Great Britain will engage directly with the public over the coming weeks to find out what people think and what they expect from us to retain or regain their support.
- Oxfam International's Executive Director Winnie Byanyima was interviewed on [Al-Jazeera](#) in a show dedicated to the preventing sexual abuse and exploitation in the sector, and discussed on the fundamental causes of sexual abuse and how Oxfam and the sector must move forward: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQ61c_L2EMw.

10 RECOMMIT AND STRENGTHEN OUR FOCUS ON GENDER JUSTICE EXTERNALLY

Our commitment: We reiterate and reinforce our commitment to putting women's rights and gender justice at the center of our work. Recognizing we have a lot to learn and put right as an organization, Oxfam will continue to build investment in advocacy, campaigns and programming focused on tackling the injustices women living in poverty face around the world. This includes addressing social norms that cause violence against women, campaigning to rectify systematic power imbalances that trap women into poverty, and partnering with feminist and women's rights organizations to address gender injustice at all levels. It includes strengthening and focusing our development and humanitarian programs to deliver transformational change in the lives of women living in poverty.

What we've done so far:

- The Oxfam Global Campaigns team is rewriting Oxfam's campaign agenda to strengthen and more fully integrate gender-focused approaches across the four global campaigns.

- In addition to building momentum behind our campaign to stop violence against women and girls, the newly launched “Behind the Price” campaign focuses on the exploitation of women producers and processors in food value chains.
- We recently launched the *#ShePaysthePrice* campaign to focus on fiscal justice for women and girls.
- In addition, the team have been working with Oxfam's Women's Rights capacity development group to develop a “Feminist Guide to Influencing” to help in the design of future projects.