



## OVERVIEW | FEBRUARY 2018 | IMMEDIATE RESPONSE ACTIONS: SEXUAL MISCONDUCT CRISIS

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The purpose of this document is to collate and summarise a range of actions that are currently being undertaken or that have been proposed by Oxfam's leadership in response to the current crisis. The aim is to ensure an urgent, comprehensive and accountable response across the Oxfam confederation which will lead to deep-rooted lasting change.

Our objective is to bring about the necessary changes to our policy, practice and culture to stamp out exploitation, abuse and harassment from all parts of our confederation, protecting those we work with and ensuring justice for survivors of abuse.

The actions listed here focus on:

- Demonstrating a meaningful commitment to **transparency and accountability**, including through the establishment of an **independent commission** to review our past and current work – the findings of which will be public, and the recommendations of which will guide further action by Oxfam
- Changing **policies, practices and culture** within Oxfam, including significantly increasing our **investment in safeguarding** and in gender training and support
- Working with others across the humanitarian and development sector to prevent this from happening again, including efforts to **reform recruitment and vetting processes** to prevent offenders from moving between organisations

### 1. **Appointing an Independent High-Level Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change**

Oxfam cannot exonerate itself from the charges made against it and should not try. The High-Level Commission will operate at arms-length from Oxfam and be comprised of senior women leaders from across the world.

The Commission's scope of enquiry will be determined by the Independent Chair in consultation with the Board of Oxfam International, and will have full powers to look at past and present cases, policies, practices and culture. The ToR of the Commission will be finalized between the Independent Commission Chair and the Board of Oxfam International. The Commission will listen to criticisms, complaints and allegations, in particular in relation to abuse of power, and sexual misconduct. It will endeavour to create a comprehensive historical record, which will be made publicly available.

Oxfam will be guided by whatever recommendations the Commission makes.



**2. Reiterated commitment across Oxfam to collaborate with all relevant authorities, including regulators and governments**

We will redouble our efforts to show transparency and a willingness to cooperate 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 now to offer to share any information they may wish to see. The aim is to ensure authorities can again feel confident in our policies and processes, with a demonstrable commitment to transparency.

**3. Re-examining past cases, and encouraging other witnesses or survivors to come forward**

We owe it to anyone who may have been affected by the misconduct of Oxfam staff to take this opportunity to look back at previous cases, and to re-examine whether or not they were dealt with appropriately. If they were not, then insofar as is possible, we will take forceful action now 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, possible and indeed actively encouraged for them to report any instances that they experienced or witnessed that they have previously felt unable to report, or that they reported but feel were not adequately dealt with at the time.

We will ensure we have an effective whistle-blower system that can be easily utilised by staff, volunteers and people external to Oxfam. More resources will be made available for this as needed, in both the short- and longer-term.

**4. Increasing our investment in safe-guarding with immediate effect**

It is clear that, across the confederation, we have not adequately resourced our safe-guarding work until now. We will significantly increase our investment in terms of both budget and staffing to ensure we have the resources in place to ensure the safety and well-being of all those who come into contact with Oxfam staff anywhere in the world.

We will also increase our investment in gender training and support across the confederation, including recruitment of additional gender leads in programmes and humanitarian response teams.

**5. Strengthening internal processes**

A number of actions are already being taken to improve our internal processes. This includes a database to ensure official references are never given to offenders seeking jobs in other organisations. It includes actions to strengthen the vetting and recruitment



of staff, including making commitment to safeguarding a mandatory part of the recruitment and selection process and the performance management criteria for all managers; overhauling the way we induct and train all staff, making safeguarding training mandatory for all current and new staff; and comprehensively retraining all staff to ensure everybody understands Oxfam's values and our code of conduct; and strengthening our whistle-blowing process alongside other tools to ensure it is safe and easy for people to raise concerns.

All Oxfam affiliates will have trained safeguarding focal points, and there will be trained safeguarding focal points at all major events organized by Oxfam.

We will re-check that reliable systems are in place for reporting any suspected illegal activity to the relevant authorities.

- 6. Re-enforcing a culture of zero tolerance towards harassment, abuse or exploitation**

We will continue to act to change cultures within Oxfam and throughout our sector that enable any form of harassment, exploitation, discrimination or abuse. This involves identifying and appointing agencies to work with and support Oxfam in achieving the cultural shift that is needed. Oxfam's PSEA Taskforce has already made recommendations that will be reviewed and acted upon with urgency.
  
- 7. Working with our peers across the sector to tackle physical, sexual and emotional abuse**

We will work with the rest of our sector to ensure people are safe, recognising that there are necessary actions that we cannot take on our own. This includes action to ensure offenders who have lost their job with one organization cannot move on to a role in another. We will actively contribute to and support joint action by international NGOs. We will work with UN bodies, the International Civil Society Centre, and other joint NGO platforms to agree concrete proposals for how we can move forward as a sector.

As part of this, we will contribute to the work initiated by BOND in the UK to develop a concept for a humanitarian passport and/or anti-offenders' system housed by an accountable agency such as UN OCHA. We will support such initiatives in any way we can.
  
- 8. Active engagement with partners and allies, especially women's rights organizations**

We will reach out to partners and allies to rebuild trust and to seek their input on how we can learn and improve. We have a particular responsibility and need to reach out to women's rights organisations and others who work on PSEA issues, to answer their questions, to hear their reflections and concerns, and to ensure our responses are defined in consultation with them, based on their insights and expertise.



We will reach out to women's rights organisations in every region and convening meeting spaces involving us, them, governments and other stakeholders.

**9. Listening to the public**

We will actively reach out to the public, through both public events and online discussions. We will listen to 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.

**10. Recommit to and strengthen our focus on gender justice externally**

We reiterate and reinforce our commitment to putting women's rights and gender justice at the centre 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 programmes to deliver transformational change in the lives of women living in poverty.