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# **Oxfam International Independent Review Panel Feedback**

**Accountability Report 2016/2017  
Review Round June 2018**



# Oxfam International

## Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

### Review Round June 2018

11 July 2018

Dear Winnie Byanyima,

Thank you for submitting your interim accountability report. We, the Independent Review Panel of Accountable Now, appreciate your efforts to continuously strengthen accountability to communities, local partners, supporters, staff, donors, or other key constituencies. Our key focus is on accountability to those you serve. It is against this background that we critically discussed your report and came to the individual assessment below.

Oxfam International's tenth accountability report is submitted in the wake of a major safeguarding crisis in early 2018, and the Panel is pleased to receive an open and self-critical report from Executive Director Winnie Byanyima, with concrete plans and processes underway to address safeguarding and accountability issues as well as organisational culture.

A dynamic relationship with stakeholders, especially women and other vulnerable groups, is identified as key to achieving a shift in accountability. Oxfam is also working to improve its partnership practices, strengthen its roots in the global South, and strengthen its feedback and complaints mechanisms. To the last point, the Panel recommends that Oxfam improve the accessibility of information about complaints processes on its website.

Overall, Oxfam has taken the Panel's feedback on board and is making appreciable efforts to improve its accountability. The Panel looks forward to hearing more about Oxfam's progress in its next full report.

Our intention is that this feedback letter, and any response you may wish to provide, is made publicly available on the Accountable Now website along with your report – as it is the case with all previously reviewed reports. However, should there be errors of fact in the feedback above or in the note below; we would of course wish to correct these before publication. Please share any comments or amendments by 8 August 2018. If you have any other feedback or comments on our work, please share them with us by sending them to the Accountable Now Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,

Mihir Bhatt

John Clark

Louise James

Saroeun Soeung



# Oxfam International's Accountability Report 2016/2017

Review Round June 2018

## PROFILE DISCLOSURES

### I. Strategy and Analysis

1.1	<p><b>Statement from the most senior decision-maker</b></p> <p><i>Fully addressed</i></p> <p>Winnie Byanyima's opening statement is open and self-critical about Oxfam's failure to effectively prevent and respond to past cases of sexual abuse and misconduct. The importance of accountability in responding to the safeguarding crisis is noted and an institutional commitment to accountability is demonstrated, with a plan to transform organisational culture and improve safeguarding, reporting, investigation, training and recruitment processes.</p> <p>Oxfam's 10-point action plan is a solid and appropriate response to the Haiti issue and we commend its seriousness. The Panel would flag that increasing transparency by offering to governments "to share any information they may wish to see" could be problematic in certain contexts, particularly in countries where the rights of association are curtailed and where CSO leaders are often targeted. A pro-active approach could be to make available to governments and other key stakeholders (donors, accountability bodies...) information about serious transgressions that have surfaced.</p> <p>There is also recognition of the need for a dynamic relationship with those Oxfam works with, with women and those most vulnerable at the centre of this.</p> <p>Oxfam's efforts to strengthen partnership approaches, improve feedback and complaints mechanisms and reporting, and root its work more strongly in the South are presented as examples of increased responsiveness and accountability in the reporting period. The Panel appreciates the efforts outlined and sentiments expressed, and looks forward to a more detailed progress update in Oxfam's next full report. A point to consider: is moving faster in responding to humanitarian crises compatible with the more rigorous hiring and vetting processes needed post-Haiti, and the need to maintain high standards?</p>
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### Material changes since the last report

Oxfam continues to move towards its 2020 vision of a more globally balanced federation, with seven regional platforms established, 50 country programmes under



Ol line management, and the remaining 17 in the process of transitioning. A mid-term review of Oxfam's Strategic Plan 2020 was undertaken in mid-2017 – a summary of key findings would have been welcome.

Updates in affiliate and observer organisations, and changes to key governance and management roles are outlined. The Panel notes the recruitment of a full-time senior Head of Governance, Risk Manager, and a Chief Information Officer, as well as the merging of strategy, confederation development and governance oversight under one Director-level role.

In response to the safeguarding crisis in early 2018, Oxfam developed a [10-point action plan](#) 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”. A high-level Independent Commission of women's rights and human rights leaders was formed to review Oxfam's safeguarding practices, and a new position of Associate Director, Safeguarding and Organisational Culture was created.

The Panel looks forward to reading about progress on these points in Oxfam's next full report.

## PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

### I. Programme Effectiveness

NGO2	<p><b><i>Mechanisms for feedback and complaints</i></b></p> <p><i>Addressed</i></p> <p>The roll-out of Oxfam's Program Quality Review Process, which will enable the collection of more quantitative and qualitative information on feedback and complaints mechanisms, was delayed but is currently underway. Oxfam is also exploring how to consolidate data on complaints and corruption incidents into a single case management system across the organisation. The Panel looks forward to an update in the next report, particularly specific areas for improvement which were identified in the review and plans for action in response.</p> <p>The Panel also notes that Oxfam's complaints policy and process is somewhat difficult to find on the website – one must navigate to the <a href="#">contact page</a>, select “Contact the International Secretariat”, and from the drop-down list of questions select “how can I make a complaint?”. Some basic information is then provided, with direction to Oxfam's Board Accountability Policies for more details about the process and timeline. The Panel urges Oxfam to include a dedicated and easy-to-find section on the website with a clear overview of the complaints policy and process.</p>
NGO6	<p><b><i>Coordination with other actors</i></b></p>



	<p><i>Fully addressed</i></p> <p>Oxfam involves partners in every stage of its country strategy development process, including contextual analyses addressing external factors, including a power analysis mapping the presence and impact of other actors in the field. A more detailed explanation of this was provided in <a href="#">Oxfam's response</a> to the Panel's last feedback letter, and the Panel appreciates the processes that are in place.</p> <p>Oxfam is also involving partners in the Program Quality Review, which includes the relative added value and roles of Oxfam and other actors in programmes. The Panel notes these efforts positively, and would be interested in hearing about key findings in the next report, including how they add value and strengthen accountability mechanisms.</p> <p>The Panel also appreciates that Oxfam will work with the Partnership Brokers' Association in 2018-2019 to improve its partnership approaches. Tools and guidance on good partnership have been collected from across the confederation, and will feed into improving partnering practices.</p>
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**V. Responsible Management of Impacts on Society**

<p>SO4</p>	<p><b>Actions taken in response to corruption incidents</b></p> <p><i>Partially addressed</i></p> <p>Details are provided about the review process for reported cases of corruption – with affiliate or country teams dealing with these in the first instance, and all cases being registered in affiliates' case management systems. While information on incidents of corruption are not currently consolidated in a confederation-wide case management system, Oxfam International and affiliates have agreed to build a joint mechanism to share such data, and collective reporting systems will be explored. The Haiti experience indicates that in particularly egregious cases it is not sufficient to share <i>data</i> on malpractice; the <i>details</i> of those cases should be disclosed to particularly relevant stakeholders, for purposes of stronger and transparent accountability and to avoid accusations of cover-up later.</p> <p>The Panel looks forward to an update in the next report, and suggests that as long as this data remains disaggregated, Oxfam might consider requesting information from affiliates on any major corruption incidents to include in its accountability reports.</p>
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