Oxfam International
Suite 20, 266 Banbury Road
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16 January 2014

Dear Members of the Independent Review Panel,

We are writing in response to the feedback given by the Panel following your review of our Accountability Report.

We appreciate the Panel's comments and found them to be both constructive and informative.

Our reply to the Panel's specific comments can be found in an annex to this letter.

Sincerely,

Winnie Byanyima
Executive Director
Oxfam International

Annex

Oxfam International Response to INGO Accountability Charter Feedback
Oxfam International Annual Report 2012-13

NGO4 – Gender and diversity
Partially addressed
Comments: Good information is provided on Oxfam addressing and embedding gender goals within the organisation and workforce. Oxfam is commended for carrying out a Learning Review on what makes a gender-just organisation. A link to the results could have been useful in the report. No information is however given on how Oxfam mainstreams broader diversity issues into its work programmes and projects, how successful this has been in the past and if targets for improvement have been set for the future.

Oxfam has made considerable progress in our work to increase the visibility of gender justice and women's rights throughout our programs and projects. Gender standards and guidance were produced for country teams, planned programmatic, advocacy and learning initiatives and support was provisioned to ensure women's rights are central to the rest of Oxfam's work. Gender is a 'foundational' issue for all of our work, as part of our rights-based approach. This has developing and amplifying gender power analysis in program design, conducting trainings on the minimum standards for gender in emergencies, and developing feminist principles for our MEAL work, which instructs monitoring, learning and evaluating our contribution to changing unequal gender and power relations (as key facets of poverty and inequality). Our Affiliate Oxfam Canada developed a conceptual framework and a toolkit for transformative organizational capacity building, both of which can be found here: http://www.oxfam.ca/our-work/publications/power-of-gender-just-organizations. A synthesis of the results of the Engendering Change Program Mid-term review are available here: http://www.oxfam.ca/sites/default/files/oxfam-gender-just-organizations-web-4.pdf.

The Oxfam International Program Standards (http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/oxfam-program-standards.pdf) require consideration of broader diversity issues at every stage of our program work at all levels, including that of our partners. This includes strategic planning, management, implementation, evaluation and withdrawal strategies. We take care to listen to and involve the people we work with, including those facing discrimination. Specific programmes and projects work with particularly vulnerable marginalised groups dependent on local contexts, and our humanitarian work takes account of especially vulnerable groups. There is currently no overarching work to measure the success of diversity mainstreaming specifically, but it is addressed as part of the Program Standards Self-Assessment. More detail is available on page 59 of the Oxfam Annual Report.

NGO6 – Coordination with other actors
Partially addressed
Comments: The report provides relevant examples of Oxfam's successful cooperation work. However, concrete criteria and internal requirements to avoid duplication and to identify greater leverage through systematic alignment with the optimal partners are missing. There are furthermore no formal processes in place to promote learning for the sector.

The key relationships Oxfam seeks are those that most effectively address the root causes of poverty, vulnerability and injustice, and that help strengthen people as empowered agents of their own development. Oxfam International, as Secretariat to the Oxfam Confederation, does not engage in program work, but instead has established standards for use by Affiliates as well as our work in campaigns, advocacy and humanitarian response. Our Partnership Principles (http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/oxfam-partnership-principles.pdf) and in particular principle 2; 'complementarity of purpose and value added' recognize the significance of collaborative work as well as the importance of valuing diverse contributions and avoiding duplication of work.

Oxfam Program Standard 2 (http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/oxfam-program-standards.pdf) highlights the importance of developing key relationships and partnerships in order to deliver change. In the program management cycle, this is a key and continuous exercise; in advocacy and campaigns work it is often done in the development of alliances work. In fact, the approval process for international priority campaigns includes two criteria relevant to the coordination with other actors including: the existence of a strong alliance strategy (Oxfam is able to contribute to and to connect with a movement for change that reaches critical mass) and evidence of Oxfam's genuine added value (other actors cannot achieve desired change without Oxfam's involvement).

The Oxfam confederation promotes learning for the sector by making our evaluations publically available, providing thought leadership and facilitating discussion through Oxfam blogs, presenting at international conferences (American Evaluation Association, International Studies Association), and participating in cross-sector initiatives (ALNAP, 3ie, iScale).

The Oxfam Southern Campaigning and Advocacy Principles and Guidelines (http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/oxfam-southern-campaigning-and-advocacy.pdf) demonstrate the particular consideration Oxfam gives to its campaigning and advocacy work with southern partners and allies. Staff are required to demonstrate transparently that they have taken due account of the guidelines in the way they engage in southern advocacy and campaigning. We involve core partners in biennial southern learning events. Our series of case studies on southern influencing (forthcoming) examines Oxfam's role and relationships with local organisations and social movements.

LA12 – Performance and career development reviews
Partially addressed
Comments: Oxfam does offer appraisal reviews but the report does not provide information on the percentage of total employees who received a formal performance appraisal. More information is also welcome on how the organisation's performance reviews are effectively linked to the attainment of Oxfam's overall strategic goals – how this helps to assess global talent needs and support its development.

% of Total Oxfam International Employees receiving a Formal Performance Appraisal in 2013

Departments	Appraisals Due	Received	% Yes	Not Received	% No
Advocacy & Campaigns	30	29	97%	1	3%
Confederation Development	4	4	100%	0	0%
Directorate	2	2	100%	0	0%
Global Communications	15	14	93%	1	7%
Global Programs	15	15	100%	0	0%
Operations	10	10	100%	0	0%
Total	**76**	**74**	**97%**	**2**	**3%**

Performance reviews measure success against individual annual objectives, which are drawn from team / departmental plans, which in turn are drawn down from the organisation's Operational Plan , which is informed by Oxfam's Strategic Plan. Staff not reaching an adequate level of performance are normally placed onto Improvement Action plans.

SO3 – Anti-corruption training
Partially addressed
Comments: Oxfam has a policy of "Whistle-blowing and Complaints" in place and encourages its staff to read anti-corruption practices. It should however be noted that the percentage of staff receiving anti-corruption training is missing.

We are unable to provide statistics on the percentage of Oxfam International staff receiving anti-corruption training for 2013. Into 2014 this policy shall be covered as standard practice through our induction programme.

3.5 – Process for defining report content
Fully addressed
Comments: The report includes relevant information on the process for defining the report's content and the identification of the audience. Oxfam is however encouraged to report more on how this process was used to better embed the Charter as a quality assurance tool within all functions of the organisation.

Incorporating the INGO Accountability Charter's reporting parameters into the Oxfam Annual report has brought staff at all levels into direct contact with the principles of accountability and increased awareness and engagement with the Charter. The stringent requirements highlights areas for development, and supported the Accountability Group's efforts to share good practice between affiliates More information on this can be found in the summary of the third INGO Accountability Charter webinar here: http://www.ingoaccountabilitycharter.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/3rd-Webinar-Summary.pdf

NGO1 – Stakeholder involvement
Fully addressed
*Comments: The answer reflects a differentiated and committed approach to meaningful stakeholder involvement. Introducing an operational goal on accountability is a strong evidence of a systematic approach to enhancing the organisational accountability. This can be seen as **good practice** for larger organisations. A link to written guidelines would however be welcome.*

Oxfam International's commitment to stakeholder engagement is stated in the Board Accountability Policies which are shared here: http://www.oxfam.org/en/about/accountability/board. The single Oxfam Stakeholder Engagement Policy referenced in the Annual Report is being developed by the group implementing the new Accountability Operational Goal, and will be shared publicly once complete.

NGO3 – Programme monitoring, evaluation and learning
Fully addressed
Comments: The organisation has established a clear and succinct monitoring and evaluation framework: the Programme Standards Self-Assessment helps Oxfam to critically assess its programme practice against the organisation's standards and strategies. A link in the report would however be welcome. It would also be interesting to know how this system has led to corrective actions and to learn more on how the organisation shares its learning with the rest of the sector.

We have not yet produced a public report on the Program Standards Self-Assessment, primarily because the baseline is not yet completed in all the countries where we work. However, we will inform the public about the process, main results and the organizational impact once the baseline is complete. We expect that to be around June 2014.

Since the launch of the Program Standards Self-Assessment (PSSA) 143 program teams in 45 countries have assessed their programs against the Oxfam Program Standards. Based on their findings, they developed plans to improve the programs and will assess their progress on a yearly basis. Feedback from program teams also suggests that the exercise first and foremost contributes to a shared understanding of what the Oxfam program standards mean in practice and how our current programming practice relates to our aspirations. Based on that understanding, teams can better determine concrete steps towards improving quality at the program level. Some colleagues also find the PSSA useful as a tool for designing programs.

Reports on emerging trends in terms of how well we are doing compared to our standards across countries are shared with Oxfam governance bodies and functional groups on an ongoing basis. At a global and regional level, the PSSA findings help us improving how we support our programs in the countries where we work. For example, we have recently started a pilot project to explore how we can better share program support resources in the area of Gender. This pilot makes use of regional and country data from the PSSA in order to inform discussions on prioritization and deployment of support resources. Additionally, a recent review of our regional governance structures built consistently on findings emerging from the PSSA.

LA10 – Workforce training

Fully addressed

Comments: A good overview is provided on Oxfam's culture of learning and on the average hours of training that staff members receive. Oxfam International is commended for its trainings on how to exit campaigns. More information on how training needs are systematically identified and how the effectiveness of trainings is evaluated is welcome.

Every Oxfam International staff member is required to have an individualised Personal Development Plan (PDP) each year. Each plan is bespoke for each member of staff and agreed in consultation and with the support of line managers, and is submitted to HR. Into 2014, HR will be continuing to develop the Learning & Development policy and budget to further improve cross-organisational analysis and planning of required interventions, including a more thorough consideration of evaluation of L&D effectiveness.