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Oxfam International (OI) Accountability Report (FY 2017/18)

Opening Statement from Winnie Byanyima, OI Executive Director

Eleven months after our last (interim) report to the Independent Review Panel, I am pleased to submit today this comprehensive report on behalf of Oxfam International and as part of our ongoing dialogue with Accountable Now. As I do so, I am both **confident in the progress we have made** in the period covered by this report, and **conscious that the effort** to strengthen our accountability (and to lead our sector in this effort) is one that **must continue**.

Accountability is at the heart of our mission as a global network that is driven by a rights-based approach: it is respect for human rights that will help lift people out of poverty and injustice, allow them to assert their dignity and guarantee sustainable development. Everyone should have the right to a livelihood; to basic services; to be safe from harm; to be heard; and to be treated as equal.

Accountability, too, must more than ever be at the heart of all we do. Through more accountability will we improve and change – as we must. This report reflects the deep-rooted reform that is underway across all of Oxfam after our past failure to protect some of the women and vulnerable people who we were meant to be helping, so that we become a true place of safety and dignity for all – transforming our policies, our culture and the way we work. We are guided by the [Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change](#) that we established in 2018; and led by women’s rights and other human rights experts on this long but necessary journey.

Our report shows the **improvements we have made** across reporting clusters, and in the areas where the Independent Review Panel had made recommendations following our interim report in May 2018. As the Panel had accepted to defer submission of this report from November 2018 to April 2019, it includes – as agreed with Accountable Now – **comprehensive information for the FY17/18** as well as **key updates for FY18/19**.

In this **opening statement**, allow me to share a few **highlights** of what is provided in more detail in the report and in the more detailed documents on which it is based.

Material changes that have occurred within Oxfam since our last report

Since our last report in May 2018, we have made further progress in the implementation of our global Oxfam Strategic Plan and our Oxfam 2020 vision of a more globally balanced confederation. **Affiliation processes** to strengthen southern voice and influence within our global network are advancing; a global **strategy process** has been initiated in October 2018; and our global **governance review** has enabled conversations around more effective global decision making and accountability.

Affiliates. Following an independent review process and the difficult decision that our ‘affiliate’ presence was not sustainable in Japan, OI supported Oxfam Japan in an organisational closure process that has concluded in March this year. Affiliation processes in Colombia and Turkey are progressing, with an application for full affiliate status by our local partner organisation in Turkey expected to be made in the 2nd half of 2019.

Governance. In the period April 2018 to March 2019, we have welcomed new affiliate executive directors in Belgium, Denmark, France, Hong Kong, India, the Netherlands and the UK. The Board of Supervisors was joined by new affiliate chairs (or their delegates) from Canada, Italy and the Netherlands. The OI Chair selection process has progressed and is expected to conclude in 2019, with interim arrangements ensuring effective leadership during this transition period. A global governance review has advanced, driven by a set of ‘design requirements’ aimed at making Oxfam’s governance and global decision-making more strategic, effective and accountable.

Management. Our Director for Strategy and Governance, our Global Director for People and our Head of Governance are now all Nairobi-based, with recruitment for a new Director of Public Engagement in process. The role of a full-time Associate Director for Safeguarding was created in June 2018, complemented by a new senior risk management role and with one of our global change managers redirecting her efforts to supporting our work on transforming organisational culture. Other recruitments are under way to further strengthen management capacity in these areas.

Income. Income for FY17/18 was recorded at over EUR 1bn. Income for FY18/19 is forecast at approx. EUR 980 as a result of reduced public and institutional income following the ‘safeguarding crisis’, although most donors have now lifted any suspensions. To effectively manage reduced income, several affiliates proceeded to review their organisational structures. Oxfam Investment Fund support to strengthen organisational and fundraising capacity in new southern affiliates and select priority markets could be maintained despite significant reductions to the OI Secretariat budget.

Safeguarding

Following the 2011 cases of **sexual abuse and misconduct** reported last year, we have tripled our funding for safeguarding and opened ourselves to more scrutiny. We are learning important lessons through our engagement with the [Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change](#), and [have welcomed](#) its January 2019 interim report. Release of the UK Charity Commission Report and the Independent Commission’s final report are pending at the time of writing.

Beyond our engagement with the Commission, implementation of our [10-Point Action Plan](#) has remained a key focus for Oxfam. Regular progress reports are published on our global website. Stronger **safeguarding policies** as well as confidential whistle-blowing **reporting lines** and enhanced standards for safeguarding investigations are now in place; and we regularly publish **data from safeguarding investigations**.

We have revised our **recruitment and referencing systems and procedures** to place a greater emphasis on commitment to our values. All Oxfam country teams now have dedicated **safeguarding focal points**, with online **safeguarding training** being rolled out and about 100 staff having gone through initial investigations training. A staff-led confederation-wide **dialogue on organisational culture change** is driving our commitment to transform; and our global campaigning structure puts more concentrated effort on the rights of women and **gender justice**. Also, every Oxfam affiliate is working at senior levels to drive **sector-wide safeguarding improvements** within their own countries.

Impact Achieved (Reporting Cluster A)

We have **increased the numbers of people we worked with** directly in many countries and increasingly use influencing strategies to leverage impact at scale – working with over 3,600 unique partner organisations and mobilizing almost 2m people to take a campaign action in FY17/18. The **percentage of our non-funding relationships is increasing** and significantly more frequent in global level work. Across the world, we are **partnering primarily with civil society actors**.

We have led **global debate on inequality** and on redesigning our economies to lift people out of poverty e.g. through our Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index; and have spoken out to protect people in **humanitarian crises**, amplifying their voice and delivering life-saving aid. We are part of youth movements, on the streets and online; and continue to challenge the deep-seated sexist beliefs and norms that justify **violence against women and girls**, both at the grassroots and in high level policy arenas such as the G7.

Our efforts continue to work consistently on **co-creating strategy with our partners**, to better understand how we can complement the role and expertise of others (including local actors) and to be nimbler in our grant and program management. Initiatives such as a learning review on our approach to ‘affiliation’ and a review of our ‘country map’ and worldwide ‘programme footprint’ have allowed us to expand our thinking on **diversity in our business model(s)** and how this can enable us to have greater and more sustainable impact.

We have learned that sound contextual analysis, MEL with a gender lens and the role Oxfam can play as a broker are all critical to contributing to **shifts in social norms**. To ensure the positive results of our work are sustained, going forward we hope to give further attention to help develop organizational and financial **sustainability of our partners**, including through better knowledge sharing.

More detailed analysis of our efforts to strengthen our impact achieved (successes, challenges and lessons learned) is included in our full report (primarily **Section 3**).

Stakeholder Involvement (Reporting Cluster B)

Oxfam continues to engage with a wide range of stakeholders. The commitment to an **‘outside in’ and ‘locally rooted’ approach** to creating change is a key driver of the global strategy process that we initiated in October 2018. **External program reviews** and a recent **evaluation of our current Strategic Plan** have also built on input from various stakeholders, including staff and partners. Evidence from these reviews has shown that we have evolved in some of our **partnering practice**, including in our safeguarding work, through alliances with women-led social organisations and engaging with the private sector along value chains.

Lessons learned are applied to increase the **number and quality of our partnership-driven initiatives** as we seek to build on examples (such as our ‘datalab’ and ‘your word counts’ projects) where our relations are starting to change from ‘transactional’ to ‘transformational’. This includes our **humanitarian response** where local NGO partners are increasingly playing a leading role. New quality standards ensure that program strategies are created in a collaborative manner and provide for explicit **feedback mechanisms and processes**, including indicators for measuring social accountability. Safe channels for providing online and offline feedback, including on issues around sexual conduct, are now offered across all countries and contexts in which we work.

More detailed analysis of our efforts to strengthen stakeholder involvement (successes, challenges and lessons learned) is included in our full report (primarily **Sections 4-6**).

Organisational Effectiveness (Cluster C)

It is our responsibility to ensure that Oxfam is not only a safe place to work, but the best place to work (and to volunteer).

We continue to strengthen **case/ complaints management systems and processes**, with Oxfam now regularly disclosing consolidated (confidential) safeguarding data on our website. Our suite of financial and risk management standards has been further strengthened and is now supported by a new senior risk management role established in FY18/19. Common financial and non-financial Key Performance Development Indicators are being developed by a 'One Management Information Strategy' Working Group.

We have also made significant improvements through our '**safer recruitment**' initiatives that include a global database of accredited referees and a revised, more clearly values-focused approach to our interview and selection process. Annual objective setting and performance review processes have also been revised along these lines, including mandatory 360 feedback for line managers. Our **Global Reward Project, Reward Principles and One Oxfam grading structure** seek to ensure fair pay by ensuring roles are rewarded commensurate to the work undertaken, while referencing local markets for external competitiveness and putting greater emphasis on gender pay analysis.

Our Learning and Organisational Development Shared Service and Global Head of Talent and Resourcing are delivering multiple **learning offers** (including through our online 'Learning at Oxfam' platform that is now used by over 75% of our global workforce). A **talent management framework** to enable more structured and streamlined staff development processes is under development.

More detailed analysis of our efforts to strengthen organizational effectiveness (successes, challenges and lessons learned) is included in our full report (primarily **Sections 7-9**).

Recommendations previously made by the Review Panel

Program Quality Review Process

Our confederation-wide Program Quality MEL systems assess the impact of Oxfam's program activities to ensure that their practices are in line with our strengthened standards. Nine case studies on the potential for inadvertently causing harm when working with communities have been turned into training materials.

Partnering Approaches

A review of Oxfam's partnership practice was implemented in cooperation with the Partnership Brokership Association in 2018. This was accompanied by a set of case studies across regions. Learning will inform future program design as well as Oxfam's global strategy process.

Feedback and Complaints/ Case Management

Significant progress on integrating the collection of feedback and complaints data has been made specifically in the area of safeguarding. Confidential data on safeguarding investigations is now publicly disclosed on a 6-monthly basis as part of our [10-Point Action Plan progress reports](#). In March 2019, the OI Board of Supervisors approved the establishment of a confederation-wide Safeguarding Shared Service that will include a single case management system and harmonized policies, procedures and joint planning (prioritizing support to countries where need is greatest).

A **confederation-wide integrated risk management framework** as well as a regulatory compliance framework are now in place. Important progress was made with the approval of a new **'Terrorism Financing and Financial Crimes' policy**. Also, an Oxfam-wide **Anti-Corruption policy** sets out mandatory guidance for all service contracts considered at higher risk of bribery. The policy applies to all personnel and other stakeholders such as consultants, volunteers, board and committee members; and extends to partner organisations with whom Oxfam is connected through any form of funding arrangement. A decision to further advance the **harmonization and adequate resourcing of audit/ fraud services and systems** in FY19/20 was taken by the global OI boards in March 2019.

Conclusion

2018 will be recalled as a watershed moment that has shaken our sector awake, and which has helped us learn important lessons that we must urgently and boldly act upon.

As we become more confident in our new safeguarding systems, we will continue to strengthen our ability to deal with any cases of abuse and misconduct. But **systemic change does not stop there**: we have to change our 'systems' but also our organizational culture, mindset and behaviours – and **challenge design flaws** inherent in what have become outdated humanitarian and development models.

This is what we commit to, as Oxfam and as a responsible actor within our sector. The global strategy process that we have initiated in October 2018 provides an opportunity for us to **build a new model** that is premised on shared values, led by those we work with and holding power together with them – fundamentally re-thinking our role as a global non-governmental organisation.

We are looking forward to the advice of Accountable Now and of the Independent Review Panel on how we can further improve on our journey and move even faster and bolder on it.

Yours sincerely,



Winnie Byanyima

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Nairobi, 3 May 2019

Key Resources/ Background Documents

Made available to the Independent Review Panel

- [Oxfam International 10 Point Action Plan and Implementation Reports](#) (July 2018, October 2018, January 2019)
- [Oxfam International Management Response](#) to the [January 2019 Interim Report](#) of the Independent Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change
- [Oxfam International Annual Report FY17/18](#)
- [Oxfam Operational Report FY17/18](#)
- [Oxfam Global Strategy Process Outline](#) (2018)
- Oxfam Strategic Plan Outcome Area Review ([2016](#) and [2019](#))
- [Review of Oxfam's Partnering Approaches](#) (2018)
- "Walking the Talk" Project Reports ([Phase I](#), 2018 and [Final](#), 2019)
- [Oxfam Country Map Review Summary](#) (2018)
- [Oxfam Governance Review Design Requirements](#) (2018)
- [Oxfam Governance Review Summary](#)
- Oxfam Strategic Plan Mid Term Reviews ([Global Balance](#) & [Influencing](#)) (2017)

We kindly request the Independent Review Panel/ Accountable Now **to confirm with Oxfam International which of the above documents can also be shared publicly** prior to release of this report, the Panel's feedback and Oxfam International's final management response.