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# **Oxfam International Independent Review Panel Feedback**

Interim Accountability Report 2019-2020

Review Round December 2020

Accountable Now · [www.accountablenow.org](http://www.accountablenow.org)

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· INGO - International NGO - Accountability Charter gUG · Company Number: HRB 212396 B



# Oxfam International Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

Review Round December 2020

4th January 2021

Dear Gabriela Bucher,

We, the Independent Review Panel of Accountable Now, thank your predecessor, Jose Maria Vera, for submitting the accountability report. We appreciate your efforts to 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 12th Accountability Report, is an interim one, and it demonstrates Oxfam International's continued commitment to dynamic accountability principles. The report addresses the areas for improvement identified in the [previous report's feedback](#). Rephrasing the panel feedback at the beginning of each section is helpful for the panel and indicates a commitment to address the specific recommendations and requests.

The Panel commends Oxfam International's approach to complaints handling mechanisms and especially the publication of the Safeguarding report (J4). This is considered **good practice**.

The Panel would recommend in the next report to have links leading to reference documents (such as the Oxfam Program Framework, the minimum standards for programs, Oxfam Country Strategy Review, Guidance on setting up community feedback systems, the One Oxfam Program Report, etc.)

We will expect your response letter in the next few weeks, which will be made publicly available on the Accountable Now website along with this feedback letter.

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,

Accountable Now's Independent Review Panel



# Oxfam International's Interim Accountability Report 2019-2020

Review Round December 2020

## Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

The opening statement by Oxfam International's interim Executive Director at the time of submission, Jose Maria Vera, highlights the changes in the organisation in the reporting period, some of them of great relevance to accountability. The 'Model and Presence Review' commits to further increasing the number of Oxfam Affiliates in the South, and transforming Oxfam's engagement in fragile contexts.

The governance review is also highlighted, which will result in an International Board with independent members and a multi-stakeholder Global Assembly.

Progress on other areas - which are further explained in the report - are emphasised in the statement, as well as the strengthening of the implementation of standards and procedures on Stakeholder engagement and feedback mechanisms.

## Material changes since the last report

The following material changes are listed for the reporting period:

Oxfam Global Strategic Framework (2020-2030) was approved by the Oxfam International (OI) Boards. This framework will be rolled out through Oxfam Global Horizon Plan every 2 years. The "Model and Presence Review", in addition to the pandemic, has led to the phasing out of 18 countries. However, Kadın Emeğini Değerlendirme Vakfı (KEDV), the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work in Turkey, became a full Oxfam Affiliate. Oxfam Colombia achieved Observer status, and several Affiliates had to restructure their organization.

7 new (or interim) Executive Directors joined national Affiliates and the OI Executive Board; while 8 Affiliates have appointed new Chairpersons or decided to delegate participation in the OI Board of Supervisors to another of their Board members.

Changes on the OI Management Team are also listed, notably the appointment of the new Executive Director, Gabriela Bucher, who will start in November 2020.



The Governance Reform, started in the last reporting period, should end by April 2021. An update on income structure is also provided.

## C. We lead by example

<b>C5</b>	<p><b>Responsible Stewardship for the Environment</b></p> <p>The response refers to 'Climate Justice' in the new Global Strategic Framework as one of the areas where Oxfam will work with others to seek systemic change. Some examples of advocacy work in this area are provided.</p> <p>Internally, a 'Global Green Team' has been created to collect and promote examples of good practice across the confederation. Is this team composed of volunteers or of appointed experts? Some initiatives, such as Oxfam Affiliates' pledges to become carbon neutral are mentioned.</p> <p>The environmental strategy, currently under development, will be informed by Affiliate good practices. Also, the lessons learnt from the COVID crisis will inform the Travel Policy.</p> <p>The panel notes positively this confederation -wide effort as air travel is usually the main CO2 emissions source, and its reduction is paramount to reduce CSOs environmental footprint. The panel looks forward to reading more on the completed policy, and on the Climate Justice programmatic work and results. The Panel recommends as well to keep track of the digital pollution in its data collection, which can have an impact on GHGs emissions.</p>	<b>2</b>
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## E. We listen to, involve and empower stakeholders

<b>E1</b>	<p><b>Stakeholder Feedback</b></p> <p>The response emphasises the diversity of regions and relationships in the different working spaces, and therefore the preferred feedback mechanisms vary, although there is a preference for face to face channels. Closing the feedback loop is highlighted as an integral component in the way Oxfam manages feedback.</p>	<b>2</b>
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	<p>The <i>Oxfam's guidance</i> is noted positively by the panel as a tool to ensure a systemic approach across the organisation. Could this document be shared?</p> <p>The panel notes positively the 'Your Word Counts' system and asks whether people without access to mobile devices and/or alternative ways of using it have been considered.</p>	
<b>E2</b>	<p><b><i>Stakeholder Engagement</i></b></p> <p>The response refers to the Oxfam Program Framework, which promotes "collaborative and effective, results-focused and accountable practices in all programs and projects". The standards and Social Accountability requirements derived from the framework that relate to Stakeholder engagement are listed and briefly described. Some other recent examples of guidance documents which reflect the approach to stakeholder engagement are also briefly described.</p> <p>In the next report, the panel recommends Oxfam to provide examples and (links to) documentation to illustrate how the engagement might happen in practice.</p>	<b>2</b>
<b>J. Governance processes maximise accountability</b>		
<b>J4</b>	<p><b><i>Complaints handling mechanisms and overview of complaints (internal)</i></b></p> <p>The 'One Oxfam Safeguarding Core Standards' document summarizes Safeguarding commitments to guide practice and hold managers accountable, and highlights roles and responsibilities reinforcing that safeguarding is a shared responsibility. The panel positively notes this initiative and asks whether the document could be publicly shared, so that other CSOs can learn and see how they could adapt it to their organisations.</p> <p>The response highlights some key developments: the stress on the policy of non-reprisal within trainings, the completion of the Global Case Management (GCM) system roll out, and the Global Misconduct Webform which offers an additional multi-lingual channel to report incidents.</p>	<b>4</b>



A [link](#) to the latest safeguarding report is provided. The report provides a detailed overview of all the closed cases during the period October 2019 - March 2020. Given the size of the network and the huge reach to people and communities, the number of cases seems low. Is there any initiative to address potential underreporting?

The report also provides a list of highlights on 'Improving Safeguarding and Culture at Oxfam'. The level of detail and transparency of the report is considered **good practice**.