

## Objectives for 2019/20:

- We will continue to learn from our safeguarding failings in Haiti in 2011, deliver on our commitments and build a stronger, more effective and sustainable Oxfam for the future.
- We will work across the confederation to ensure that Oxfam country offices receive high quality programme support and manage our programme risks effectively.
- We will deliver Oxfam GB's Safeguarding Strategy as defined in April 2019 and will contribute to the agreed confederation commitment to safeguarding, with strong oversight of case management.

*In the following section we explain what we've achieved against these objectives*

## SAFEGUARDING

### Our focus

Throughout 2019/20 we continued to invest and improve our safeguarding to ensure that we better protect all those with whom we work.

In June 2019, the Charity Commission completed its inquiry into Oxfam Great Britain with the publication of a report on Oxfam's failings in Haiti and our safeguarding policies and procedures. In the same month the Oxfam confederation also accepted the recommendations of the Independent Commission, a panel of experts set up by Oxfam International to interrogate all aspects of our culture and safeguarding, past and present.

Key to building real and lasting change has been our delivery against the Action Plan agreed with the Charity Commission in July 2019. The Action Plan includes improvements to safeguarding policies, processes and training, how we recruit staff and take care of our volunteers and how we ensure that our work is carried out in as safe an environment as possible.

The independent assessor appointed to review our progress against the Action Plan has concluded that, while there is more to be done, "enormous collective efforts... have resulted in substantial changes to the way Oxfam approaches safeguarding". We look forward to the Charity Commission publishing a report in the near future into Oxfam's progress against the Action Plan, at which point we will publish the independent assessor's report in full.

In the meantime, some of the key improvements Oxfam has made are highlighted below.

While highlighting these improvements, we acknowledge that we have more to do: in safeguarding, there is always the need to learn, adapt and develop. While we do all we can to prevent sexual misconduct, we cannot guarantee that incidents will not occur. Where allegations are made, and in line with the survivor's wishes, we investigate and take appropriate action including supporting survivors. We will also continue to ensure regular independent review of our safeguarding.

### Improving our Systems

We have strengthened our survivor-centred approach to safeguarding case-management, reporting and quality assurance and improved how we communicate with people who report safeguarding concerns or may be at risk.

We helped establish a confederation-wide Global Safeguarding Shared Service which has created the standard operating procedures for case management and recording across Oxfam.

### Training

We continue to deliver an extensive programme of safeguarding training in all the countries and regions where Oxfam GB works globally and across our shop network. In response to Covid-19 restrictions, we created online safeguarding training tools to ensure that staff, volunteers and partners are provided with effective support and training during this period.

### Supporting Survivors to Speak Out

Supporting survivors and whistleblowers to speak out against abuse and exploitation is vital if we are to tackle the problem. We have worked hard to increase awareness and improve reporting mechanisms so that people feel safe to report. As a result, we have seen an increase in the number of people coming forward to report concerns, especially in our international programmes.

We have established clear, standard operating procedures to ensure a more consistent, survivor-centred approach to respond to cases, demystifying the reporting process and building trust. These procedures also include doing all we can do protect the confidentiality and safety of survivors and whistleblowers as well as providing medical, health, social, emotional and other forms of support for survivors.

We recognise that it can be difficult for local communities to report concerns, especially in challenging environments like eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Over the last year Oxfam has conducted research in three countries (Ghana, Iraq and Myanmar) to deepen our understanding of the common issues and barriers that prevent people speaking out.

The research has helped us to understand the complex dynamics influencing how people engage with us (for example why women, girls, men and boys have and choose different options) and how we can enhance our processes to keep people safe and uphold our commitments. We are committed to working with other aid agencies, local partners and communities to act on the findings and develop solutions to overcome these barriers.

### Safe Programming

We have accelerated our work to ensure that all those affected by our humanitarian and development programmes can participate safely and that we manage the risks our work may pose. The approach, known as Safe Programming, includes training and toolkits for staff and partners as well as conducting research within communities so that we are more accountable.

## Safeguarding Specialists

We have continued to strengthen our safeguarding capacity and increased the number of dedicated safeguarding staff. We now have two safeguarding specialist Humanitarian Support Personnel who, when travel is not restricted, are deployed to humanitarian emergencies for three months to provide intense safeguarding support.

The Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar and Yemen have full time safeguarding coordinators, with the DRC post sitting in the Senior Management Team. We fund three regional safeguarding advisors to support the delivery of training and sharing best practice around the world.

Oxfam's confederation-wide Global Shared Safeguarding service now includes 33 safeguarding positions and 182 trained focal points working with staff and communities at a country level.

## Safer Recruitment and Working Culture

As part of our commitment to improve our culture and ensure that all staff understand and share our values, our recruitment processes and interviews now include mandatory questions on values, safeguarding and feminist principles. We have also introduced initiatives to increase awareness and understanding amongst staff of how to challenge negative behaviours and misconduct, including concerns of bullying and racism.

## Governance

To monitor progress and oversee the delivery of continued improvements, in 2018 we created a trustee safeguarding committee, led by the Chair of Trustees. This was replaced in April 2020 by the Safeguarding & Ethics Committee chaired by the new Safeguarding Lead Trustee who was recruited for her extensive safeguarding experience. We also recruited a former Chief Crown Prosecutor, with experience in child sexual exploitation and violence against women, as an independent member of the Safeguarding & Ethics Committee.

In addition, every meeting of the Council of Trustees considers reports on safeguarding issues with a more detailed review of trends every six months.

## Safeguarding cases in 2019/20

In 2019/20 Oxfam GB's Safeguarding Team investigated 73 cases compared with 49 cases in the previous year. This reflects the work we have done to encourage people to report concerns. 53 of the cases related to our international programmes and 20 to our trading operation in the UK. The team received a further 49 reports which either were not a safeguarding matter, did not implicate Oxfam or related personnel, were duplicate reports or were requests for advice on safeguarding, enquiries about DBS check and concerns about well-being of staff and volunteers.

### Of the 73 cases that were investigated:

- **42 were upheld or partially upheld resulting in:**
- **15** dismissals
- **11** formal warnings
- **16** other action (this includes training or where the subject of the complaint – the alleged perpetrator – left Oxfam, the outcome was noted on their records and will be used in any request for a reference)
- **One** case was referred directly to the police and no further action was required by Oxfam.
- **11** were not upheld
- **11** other action taken\* – mainly because the survivor did not consent to an investigation
- **6** were found, after initial investigation, not to be safeguarding issues and either passed to HR or no further action taken
- **2** are ongoing
- **Of the 73 cases.** seven were referred to police, social services or local authorities. Those completed and upheld are included in the above data.

*\* In these instances, depending on the nature of the alleged misconduct, we worked to mitigate the risk by other means including by providing training, putting preventative measures in place or not renewing a contract. If a contract was ended, it was noted on the HR records and will be used in any request for a reference.*

### Of the total safeguarding investigations, the subjects of complaint were made up of:

- **43** Staff
- **18** volunteers
- **7** partners or contractors
- **4** community members or beneficiaries/ programme participants
- **1** identity unknown

### Of the total safeguarding investigations, survivors were made up of:

- **31** staff
- **20** community members or beneficiaries/ programme participants
- **21** volunteers
- **1** identity unknown

## Safeguarding - Democratic Republic of Congo

In September 2020, The New Humanitarian and Thomson Reuters published a media investigation into sexual abuse in the Ebola response in eastern DRC. More than 50 cases were referenced, one of which related to Oxfam and we had already investigated. Our handling of the case and Oxfam's safeguarding in DRC were subsequently reviewed by the Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative (HQAI), an independent auditor. HQAI concluded that Oxfam took appropriate and necessary measures in this case as well as acknowledging our ongoing work to prevent misconduct and build trust so people feel safe to speak out. Oxfam is the only organisation mentioned in the media reports to have HQAI certification.