ICS Centre CEO Call on 21 February

Background Research on Oxfam Scandal and ICSO reactions

19 February 2018

1. Short Abstract: What happened?

Times Article, 09 February 2018

The Times Investigative team published an article on 09 February reporting about Oxfam staff that misbehaved during the 2011 Haiti Earthquake relief. The full article *Oxfam in Haiti: ‘It was like a Caligula orgy with prostitutes in Oxfam T-shirts*’ can be found [here](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/oxfam-in-haiti-it-was-like-a-caligula-orgy-with-prostitutes-in-oxfam-t-shirts-p32wlk0rp).

Oxfam’s Press Response, 09 February 2018

Oxfam immediately responded to the allegations with several press releases and disclosing actions that were taken against the misconduct in Haiti already in 2011. The Full Press release can be found [here](https://www.oxfam.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2018/02/oxfam-response-to-the-times-story) the full statement by Winnie Byanyima can be found [here.](https://www.oxfam.org/en/appalling-mark-against-high-values-we-set-ourselves-oxfam)

Meanwhile: Oxfam International Chair faces charges and steps down

Dr. Fuentes Knight faces charges brought against him and other former government officials in Guatemala, dating back to his time as Minister of Finance in 2009. Oxfam supports Dr. Fuentes Knight and his decision to devote his time now to vigorously contest these charges. Full press release [here](https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2018-02-13/chair-oxfam-internationals-board-supervisors-dr-juan-alberto).

Oxfam asks women’s rights leaders to carry out urgent independent review, 16 February

An independent commission will be set up with immediate power to carry out a wide-ranging review of Oxfam’s practices and culture, including its handling of past cases of sexual misconduct. It comes as Oxfam announces a [**comprehensive plan of action**](https://www.oxfam.org/en/immediate-response-actions-sexual-misconduct-crisis)to strengthen safeguarding systems across the organisation, and stamp out abuse. Full press release below:

The plan was agreed yesterday by Oxfam International Executive Director Winnie Byanyima and has the commitment of all executive directors across the Oxfam confederation. The package of measures includes:

* A new independent High-Level Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change, comprised of leading women’s rights experts, which will be able to access Oxfam records and interview staff, partners and communities it supports around the world.
* The immediate creation of a new global database of accredited referees – designed to end the use of forged, dishonest or unreliable references by past or current Oxfam staff. Oxfam will not be issuing any references until this is in place.
* An immediate injection of money and resources into Oxfam’s safeguarding processes, with the number of people working in safeguarding more than doubling over the coming weeks and annual funding more than tripled to just over $1 million.
* A commitment to improve the culture within Oxfam to ensure that no one faces sexism, discrimination or abuse, that everyone, especially women, feels safe to speak out, and everyone is clear on what behaviour is acceptable or not.

1. Reactions by Top 30

Save the Children

Save the Children has put forward measures to improve standards of professional conduct within the aid sector following controversy over Oxfam’s handling of an inquiry into claims of sexual misconduct by its workers. Save the Children’s initiatives to address the current crisis include:

* To establish a Global Centre of Excellence for Child Safeguarding in Emergencies
* To create ‘humanitarian passports’
* To automatically designate employment in a humanitarian agency as ‘regulated’ activity under UK law. Full press release [here.](https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/news/media-centre/press-releases/save-the-children-proposes-ways-to-tackle-concerns-about-aid-sec)

ActionAid

ActionAid said in a statement: “Throughout the organisation we have a zero-tolerance policy on any form of sexual harassment and misconduct, and clear child protection policies aimed to protect beneficiaries. We have a whistleblowing policy to encourage staff to come forward if they have any concerns and if an allegation is made, processes are in place to ensure immediate and decisive action is taken. See full statement by spokesperson [here.](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/latest-news/statement-on-sexual-misconduct-reports-in-the-sector)

1. Others

BOND

Charities commit to principles to ensure zero tolerance of sexual exploitation.

NGOs have committed to the following principles:

* Ensuring that the culture within our organisations provides a safe and trusted environment that encourages those affected to come forward and report incidents
* Assuring the regulatory bodies that they have full disclosure of all safeguarding concerns at the earliest opportunity
* Sharing with the regulatory bodies the safeguarding policies and practices already in place, as well as how incidents and allegations are handled when they arise
* Where not done already, sharing the details of any incidents with the regulatory bodies
* Increasing investment and resources towards safeguarding and protecting the most vulnerable
* Ensuring that the highest safeguarding standards are applied throughout our programmes and that best practice is shared across the sector
* Carrying out work, which is already underway in collaboration with DFID, the Charity Commission and global bodies, to explore a system of passporting, registration or accreditation of humanitarian and development practitioners which will be accelerated under the leadership of UK NGOs in the hope that it may influence the practice and standards of the global aid community"

See Full Press Release [here.](https://www.bond.org.uk/press-releases/2018/02/press-release-charities-commit-to-principles-to-ensure-zero-tolerance-of-0)

InterAction Statement

“InterAction, representing U.S. nongovernmental organizations operating around the world to advance the lives of people living in the poorest and most marginalized conditions, reiterates our firm commitment to fight discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse within our community. U.S. NGOs have an obligation to the populations we serve, our staff, our supporters and donors to embody the values for which we stand”. Read full statement [here](https://www.interaction.org/article/interaction-statement-sexual-harassment-and-abuse)

NCVO – National Council of Volunteer Service

NCVO’s chair, Peter Kellner, said in a statement: “All the major charities have policies and procedures in place and dedicate significant effort to minimising the risk of abuse taking place. However, it is clear that more can and must be done, not only to revive the reputation of those charities in the news but also to maintain public confidence in the sector as a whole.” Read full statement [here](https://www.ncvo.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/2161-ncvo-statement-on-sexual-abuse-in-international-development)

Christian Aid

In a statement, Christian Aid said it had investigated two sexual misconduct cases overseas in the past 12 months. See statement [here](https://mediacentre.christianaid.org.uk/christian-aid-statement-on-sexual-harassment-claims-in-the-sector/)

ACEVO

ACEVO is the UK's largest and most influential network for charity and social enterprise leaders. CEO, Vicky Browning, reacted to the Oxfam scandal tweeting “If we want charities to be transparent - & we do - we're unfortunately going to hear more about things going wrong. Harassment and abuse clearly exist across all sectors and countries, & no-one can be complacent.”

More reactions from sector’s representatives, media and donors can be found [here.](https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/voices/reaction-to-the-oxfam-safeguarding-scandal.html)