



Approved September 2018

Whistleblower Protection Policy

Background

This policy is being updated to expand its application, refer to new disclosure pathways and clarify Oxfam Canada obligations with respect to confidentiality and certain protections for whistleblowers.

Revisions/Additions to 2013 Policy

The policy has been expanded to include – in addition to Board members, managers, staff, members and volunteers – partners, consultants and contractors working with Oxfam Canada. This is intended to encourage disclosure across Oxfam Canada's operations by extending protections to groups outside the organization. Contracts and agreements with these groups will reflect this change.

The list of 'reportable concerns' has been expanded to include financial and sexual misconduct, abuse and exploitation of vulnerable groups, breach of policy, abuse of position and activity that could bring Oxfam Canada into disrepute. While implied in the 2013 version, through reference to breaches of ethical standards and the Oxfam Code of Conduct, these issues, which Oxfam Canada identifies as serious and therefore constituting 'reportable concerns', are now made explicit with this change. This also aligns more closely with related Oxfam (and specifically Oxfam Great Britain) policy.

The policy now clarifies that Oxfam Canada cannot *guarantee* confidentiality in all instances. While we treat all disclosures with utmost discretion, and endeavor to keep confidential reports, this may not be possible where identification is required by law or in order to enable the organization or law enforcement to conduct an adequate investigation.

A clause has been added outlining redress measures for whistleblowers who believe that they have been subject to retaliation. This was an omission from the 2013 version, and has been included now as a critical protection measure.



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Policy Name:	Whistleblower Protection Policy
Source:	Oxfam International
Date Last Reviewed:	2013 – Policy Committee
Approval or Last Revision:	February 2013 and September 2018
Approved By:	Oxfam Canada Board of Directors (2018)

Policy Statement

Oxfam Canada encourages its personnel, members, volunteers, partners, consultants and contractors to report serious concerns related to Oxfam Canada through the appropriate reporting mechanism without fear of reprisal. Oxfam Canada will protect whistleblowers from victimization and dismissal.

Raising a concern

A person with evidence or suspicion (the 'whistleblower') of:

- a criminal offence;
- a failure to comply with any legal obligations;
- financial wrongdoing, including theft, bribery, fraud, money laundering and aid diversion;
- sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse;
- abuse or exploitation of children, vulnerable adults, or beneficiaries;
- a breach of ethical standards subscribed to by Oxfam Canada including the Code of Conduct for Oxfam members and/or the Code of Conduct for Board members, as the case may be;
- breach of Oxfam policy;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- danger to the health and safety of any individual, or damage to the environment;
- activity that would bring the organization into serious disrepute;
- the deliberate concealment of information, which may lead to any of the matters listed above,

must raise the concern (a "reportable concern") to:

- their immediate manager or supervisor, and,
- the Oxfam Canada Complaints Officer (currently the Manager of Human Resources), or,

where appropriate:

- the Oxfam Canada Safeguarding Focal Point (currently the Manager of Human Resources), if the reportable concern relates to sexual misconduct or abuse or exploitation of children, vulnerable adults or beneficiaries;
- the Oxfam Country Director, if the whistleblower is an Oxfam staff person in Cuba, or the reportable concern is outside Canada;
- the Oxfam Canada Executive Director or Chair of the Board, or in the case of a reportable concern involving the Chair of the Board, another Board Officer.

If the person raising a reportable concern is not comfortable doing so directly, an anonymous disclosure may be made using the Oxfam Canada or international Oxfam hotline – see information below.



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Assuring confidentiality

Insofar as possible, Oxfam Canada endeavors to keep confidential all reports received from whistleblowers. However, it may not be possible to maintain complete confidentiality where identification is required by law or in order to enable the organization or law enforcement to conduct an adequate investigation. Examples include reportable concerns related to sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse (see No Harassment/No Violence in the Workplace Policy – HR 3.4).

If it is not possible to resolve the reportable concern without revealing the whistleblower's identity, the Complaints Officer will discuss the implications with the whistleblower.

In order to avoid hindering an investigation and to prevent frivolous or malicious complaints, anonymous disclosures are discouraged, while recognizing that unequal power relations may make this the appropriate choice for the whistleblower.

Investigation of allegation

Oxfam Canada endeavors to deal with disclosures as sensitively and quickly as possible. The Complaints Officer (currently the Manager of Human Resources) will investigate the allegation within two weeks of the disclosure having been made. In the case of an allegation involving the Complaints Officer, the investigator will be named by the Executive Director. In the case of an allegation involving the Executive Director, the investigator will be named by the Chair of the Board, or in the case of a situation involving the Chair, the Vice-Chair.

The whistleblower may be asked for further information during the course of the investigation.

Outcome of investigation

On completion of an investigation, appropriate action will be taken to resolve the issue, which may result in disciplinary action (including dismissal or referral to relevant authorities). The whistleblower will be informed that the issue has been resolved, and when possible, the outcome of the investigation. If they are not satisfied with the response, the matter will be referred to the Executive Director, or if that person is involved in the case or if the case involves a Board member, to the Chair, or in the case of the Chair, another Board Officer.

Protections

Oxfam Canada will take appropriate disciplinary action (up to and including dismissal) in accordance with the established disciplinary procedure (see No Harassment/No Violence in the Workplace Policy – HR 3.4) against any individuals found to be:

- victimizing any personnel, members, volunteers, partners, consultants and contractors for using this procedure, or deterring them from reporting concerns under it; or



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- making a disclosure maliciously that is known to be untrue, or without reasonable grounds for believing that the information supplied was accurate.

In the case of Board members, members and volunteers, breaches of this policy would be seen as a breach of the Code of Conduct for Board Members and the Code of Conduct for Members and Supporters.

Whistleblowers who believe that they have been retaliated against may file a written complaint with the Executive Director, or if that person is involved in the case or if the case involves a Board member, to the Chair, or in the case of the Chair, another Board Officer. Any complaint of retaliation will be promptly investigated and appropriate disciplinary action taken, as set out above, if allegations of retaliation are substantiated.

Under this policy, individuals raising concerns in good faith, or with reasonable grounds for believing that the information supplied was accurate, will not be subject to any form of retaliation or disciplinary action, even if the concern is not upheld.

Oxfam Canada Whistleblowing Hotline

Email: speakup@oxfam.ca

Phone number: (613) 627-8699

(monitored by Complaints Officer, currently HR Manager)

International Oxfam Whistleblowing Hotline

Safeguarding: safeguarding@oxfam.org.uk

Anti-Corruption Team: anticorruption@oxfam.org.uk

Whistleblowing: whistleblowing@oxfam.org.uk

Confidential Helplines:

English: 0044 (0) 1865 47 2120

Arabic: 0044 (0) 1865 47 2121

French: 0044 (0) 1865 47 2122

Portuguese: 0044 (0) 1865 47 2124

Spanish: 0044 (0) 1865 47 2123