

Oxfam International

Maintenance Audit 2 – Report - 2024/12/02

1. General information and audit activities

Role / name of auditor(s)	Joanne O’Flannagan	
Audit cycle	Second cycle	
Opening Meeting	Date / number of participants	Any substantive issues arising
	30.10.2024 / 30 participants	None
Closing Meeting	28.11.2024 / 29 participants	None
Interviews	Position / level of interviewees	Number
	GHT, OI, EA - directors, leads, managers, advisors, business partners	10

2. Actions and progress of organisation

2.1 Significant change or improvement since the previous audit

Since the Recertification (2022) and Maintenance (2023) audits, Oxfam continues to make progress against the identified areas of weakness and take action to address the open CARs.

Several strategic steps have been established or initiated since the last audit (MA1):

The Programme & Nexus Forum (PNF), established by the Executive Directors Forum (EDF), leads on global programming, focusing on the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus. The PNF ensures that Oxfam’s approach reflects its principles and goals, aiming for systemic change and impact. It focuses on supporting Oxfam’s humanitarian mandate, ensuring principled action that meets the Core Humanitarian Standard, and recommending new responses outside the Oxfam Country Map. To enhance efficiency, the creation of a PNF Humanitarian Subcommittee has been established to lead on the humanitarian agenda, ensuring high-quality, adaptable responses aligned with Oxfam’s principles and ToRs have been developed accordingly.

The Quality Working Group (QWG), comprising members from the Humanitarian Working Group, seeks to improve the quality and impact of humanitarian programmes at Oxfam. The group has identified key challenges in programme quality, structure and capacity, and organisational culture. While some challenges are outside their control, the QWG aims to address these areas through focused workstreams to foster a culture of high-quality, impactful humanitarian responses. The QWG has defined ToRs and a detailed action plan which addresses a number of areas related to core dimensions of quality and accountability, as per the CHS.

Oxfam has strengthened the integration of evaluation findings into its annual meta-analysis review; the review supports the organisation to assess adherence to the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) at a global level. This process, alongside regular updates to the Humanitarian Improvement Plan, supports Oxfam’s commitment to continuous improvement and accountability. As part of Oxfam International’s Risk and Management framework, the Global Risk Report is shared with the Executive Directors Forum, the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee of Oxfam’s Board and the full Oxfam Board, detailing risk mitigation action plans and recommendations. Oxfam International categorises risks into 10 groups, including 'Humanitarian,' which focuses on addressing challenges identified in annual audits of the CHS Certification process. Further, a 2023 Humanitarian Capacity Analysis, aligned with Oxfam’s humanitarian commitments, highlighted capacity needs and informed the subsequent management response to support implementation of sustainable solutions to capacity needs. These actions include a focus on: enhanced coordination and connectedness across the confederation, ensuring adequate funding to support GHT minimum capacity needs and investing significantly in humanitarian staff development, among other recommendations.

Oxfam's Country Operational Plan and other planning and reporting tools aim to provide essential information for Regional Directors and Country Directors, ensuring accountability and effective programme management. A new question has been added to the Country Operational Plan to strengthen the integration of the revised CHS in country-level programming. Additionally, GHT Accountability Advisors organised webinars in multiple languages to introduce the revised CHS, foster reflection, share best practices and build linkages with different teams across the confederation.

2.2 Summary on corrective actions

Corrective Action Requests (CAR)	Type and resolution timeframe	Progress made to address the CAR and in response to the findings of the indicator	Evidence (doc no., KII)
2022-8.4: Oxfam does not ensure it has sufficient staff capacity to deliver programmes	Minor 2025/11/16)	<p>Oxfam continues to target resources towards implementing enhanced efficiency at all levels of the confederation and addressing issues of capacity and staff overstretch; this remains a key priority for leadership at all levels.</p> <p>Interviews and document evidence indicate that issue of staff overstretch is a key priority for leadership with a strong focus on helping staff prioritise what they can achieve despite the day to day demands placed on them. Management at different levels share a concern to support staff in achieving greater balance with regard to workload.</p> <p>Since the last audit, Oxfam has made progress in developing a humanitarian roster system that is harmonised across the confederation. A detailed proposal has been developed and work is underway to refine system requirements to optimise efficiency along with guidance for operationalisation. The roster is intended to contribute to enhanced organisational preparedness in humanitarian response and ensuring more coherent support from across the confederation.</p> <p>There are a number of other recent strategic initiatives, work plans and working groups focused on bringing about lasting change and impact, and while some plans are not yet fully realised they are in line with the overall focus and ambition to improve, in a coherent way, to achieve adequate and sustainable humanitarian response capacity while continuing to deliver high quality and impactful programmes for people and communities affected by crisis.</p> <p>Revised Recruitment and Selection Procedures have been finalised, harmonised across all Countries, Clusters and Regions (CCR) and are currently being rolled out. The primary focus is to attract and retain the right staff while maintaining a focus on ensuring that Oxfam can flex and adapt into the future through effective recruitment processes.</p> <p>At the end of 2023, Oxfam launched a Total Rewards Project in response (in part) to results from previous staff surveys indicating lower satisfaction levels with regard to pay and benefits. Interviews with staff indicate that this issue remains a concern as reflected in the 2024 staff survey. The project aims to create an approach that attracts and retains top talent while aligning with Oxfam's values and strategic goals. The next steps include reflecting on progress, ensuring alignment with Oxfam's policy positions on labour, reviewing the implementation proposal, and</p>	<p>ORG1 ORG4 ORG5 ORG7 ORG8 ORG9 ORG10 ORG11 ORG12 ORG13 ORG14 ORG15 ORG17 ORG27 ORG30 ORG31 ORG32</p> <p>Interviews with staff</p>

		<p>finalising the recruitment for the Head of Total Rewards. The initiative focuses on improving policies and systems in line with feminist leadership and decolonisation principles.</p> <p>The Strategic Priorities for 2024-2027 of the Global Programme Management Team (GPMT) include a focus on Resources and Capacities based on a review of Oxfam's geographical and in-country presence and resource allocation, to consider how it can best position resources and capacity. The goal is to create sustainable resourcing models and redefine criteria for resource allocation, including Collective Resources Allocation (CRA) and Discretionary Funding (DF) with the aim of developing more predictable, coherent funding for countries, clusters, regions, and southern affiliates, leading to enhanced capacity to respond to areas of highest need.</p> <p>The Let's Talk Working Group has widened its representation through a recruitment drive to ensure broader representation across Countries, Clusters, Regions and Affiliates. The group has updated its ToR and now works under Transforming Business Support (TBS), the umbrella framework for improving business services (greater harmonisation and streamlining across the confederation). Although the group does not have any dedicated resources, its position under TBS allows it to have greater scope to engage more strategically and inform tools and processes that can support harmonised performance management more efficiently and effectively across the confederation with a particular focus on Countries, Clusters & Regions.</p> <p>Oxfam International is also working to train staff on managing workload, stress, and burnout by implementing a Workplace Mental Wellbeing Risk Assessment & Action Plan tool. Success will be measured through key performance indicators like reduced stress and increased employee satisfaction, while ensuring alignment with Oxfam's values. Additionally, the Culture Working Group (CWG), formed after the 2018 safeguarding crisis, continues to focus on organisational culture, with a subgroup dedicated to addressing workload as a priority project.</p>	
2022-9.4: Oxfam does not systematically consider the impact of its operations and programmes on the environment.	Minor 2025/11/16	<p>Oxfam demonstrates ongoing commitment to the strategic importance of increasing Oxfam's environmental sustainability. Documents and interviews indicate evidence of progress made to address the open CAR:</p> <p>There is evidence of effective working and networking across teams in different parts of the confederation, and at different levels, to communicate and promote the mainstreaming of environmental sustainability considerations across all aspects of Oxfam's work and operations. Interviews with staff indicate a clear commitment to integrate environmental ambitions into Oxfam's day to day work (while recognising competing priorities and demands). For example, the Sustainable Supply & Logistics group has produced guidance to support the adoption of more sustainable practices in relation to waste management and energy supply.</p> <p>The GHT is currently focusing on projects to increase environmental sustainability in WASH (guidance, research) and continues to roll out training and use of the Neat+</p>	<p>ORG17 ORG18 ORG19 ORG20 ORG21 ORG24 ORG25 ORG28</p> <p>Interviews with staff</p>

		<p>toolkit. Oxfam was also a key member of the Environmental Assessments Working Group of the Réseau Environnement Humanitaire (REH) that developed the MERA (Multi-sectoral Environmental Risks Analysis) matrix to help organisations become aware of the environmental risks that the projects may entail, and to formulate recommendations to mitigate these risks (launched October 2024).</p> <p>Since the last audit, Oxfam has finalised and submitted its planned actions and targets for the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations, outlining how it will address the seven commitments. It is intended that the targets will serve as a framework to track progress and ensure accountability.</p> <p>Further, Oxfam published its first Environmental Sustainability Report, establishing a baseline for Oxfam's carbon footprint and measuring progress. Templates have been developed and shared to track emissions and measure progress against the baseline. A mapping exercise has been initiated to track global carbon emissions allowing Oxfam to track progress; this is supported by an Environmental Sustainability Dashboard to provide a comprehensive and global overview of data on emissions across Oxfam's operations as well as environmental sustainability initiatives. The dashboard is relatively new but already generating substantial information at a global level; plans to migrate to a new system by the end of 2024 will result in higher quality monitoring capability.</p> <p>Oxfam is currently finalising its Environmental Sustainability Strategy focused around key objectives and targets, and alongside this has also formulated externally validated decarbonisation scenarios to support the establishment of mid-term targets (by 2030). The organisation plans to present the strategy to relevant management in early 2025; approval of the strategy is expected to later in 2025.</p>	

3. Summary of non-conformities

Corrective Action Requests (CAR)	Type	Status	Resolution timeframe
2022-8.4: Oxfam does not ensure it has sufficient staff capacity to deliver programmes.	Minor	Open	by 2025 (RA)
2022-9.4: Oxfam does not systematically consider the impact of its operations and programmes on the environment.	Minor	Open	by 2025 (RA)
Total Number of open CARs		2	

4. Claims Review

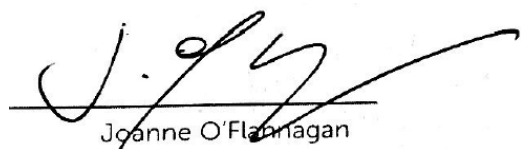
Claims Review conducted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Follow-up required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
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5. Lead auditor recommendation

In my opinion, Oxfam International has demonstrated that it is taking necessary steps to address the CARs identified in the previous audit and continues to conform with the requirements of the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.

I recommend maintenance of certification.

Name and signature of lead auditor:



 Joanne O'Flanagan

Date and place:

2nd December 2024

Belfast, Northern Ireland

6. HQAI decision

- ☒ Certificate maintained
☐ Certificate suspended

- ☐ Certificate reinstated
☐ Certificate withdrawn

Surveillance audit before: 2025/12/15

Name and signature of HQAI Executive Director:

Désirée Walter 

Date and place:

Geneva, 18 December 2024

7. Acknowledgement of the report by the organisation

Space reserved for the organisation

Any reservations regarding the audit findings and/or any remarks regarding the behaviour of the HQAI audit team:

If yes, please give details:

☐ Yes ☒ No

Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Findings:

I acknowledge and understand the findings of the audit

☒ Yes ☐ No

I accept the findings of the audit

☒ Yes ☐ No

Name and signature of the organisation's representative:

Marta Valdes



Date and place:

Barcelona 23rd Dec 2024

Appeal

In case of disagreement with the quality assurance decision, the organisation can appeal to HQAI within 14 workdays after being informed of the decision.

HQAI will transmit the case to the Chair of the Advisory and Complaint Board who will confirm that the basis for the appeal meets the appeals process requirements. The Chair will then constitute an appeal panel made of at least two experts who have no conflict of interest in the case in question. The panel will strive to come to a decision within 45 workdays.

The details of the Appeals Procedure can be found in document PRO049 – Appeals Procedure.

Annex 1: Explanation of the scoring scale*

Scores	Meaning: for all verification scheme options	Technical meaning for all independent verification and certification audits
0	Your organisation does not work towards applying the CHS commitment.	<p>Score 0: indicates a weakness that is so significant that the organisation is unable to meet the commitment. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent verification: major weakness. Certification: major non-conformity, leading to a major corrective action request (CAR) – No certificate can be issued or immediate suspension of certificate.
1	Your organisation is making efforts towards applying this requirement, but these are not systematic.	<p>Score 1: indicates a weakness that does not immediately compromise the integrity of the commitment but requires to be corrected to ensure the organisation can continuously deliver against it. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent verification: minor weakness. Certification: minor non-conformity, leading to a minor corrective action request (CAR).
2	Your organisation is making systematic efforts towards applying this requirement, but certain key points are still not addressed.	<p>Score 2: indicates an issue that deserves attention but does not currently compromise the conformity with the requirement. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent verification and certification: observation.
3	Your organisation conforms to this requirement, and organisational systems ensure that it is met throughout the organisation and over time – the requirement is fulfilled.	<p>Score 3: indicates full conformity with the requirement. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent verification and certification: conformity.
4	Your organisation's work goes beyond the intent of this requirement and demonstrates innovation. It is applied in an exemplary way across the organisation and organisational systems ensure high quality is maintained across the organisation and over time.	<p>Score 4: indicates an exemplary performance in the application of the requirement.</p>

* Scoring Scale from the CHSA Verification Scheme 2020