

THE OXFAM SEX SCANDAL

“A lie has no Leg, but a Scandal has Wings”

–Thomas Fuller

Grace Komarek–Meyer
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NPA 601: NONPROFIT ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Fall 2018

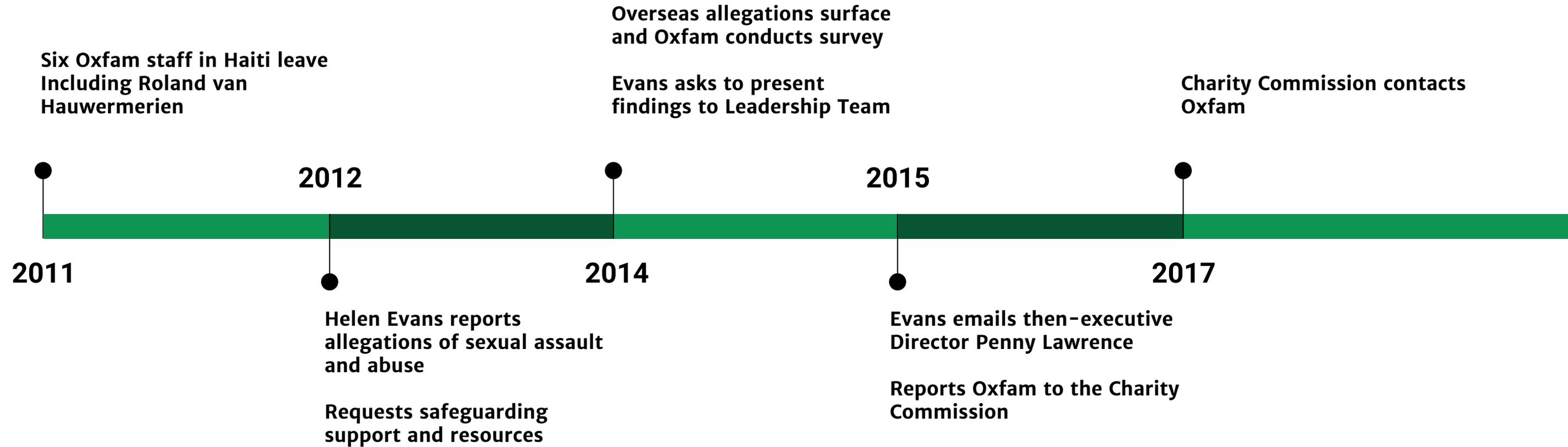
Prof. Marco Tavanti. Ph.D

SUMMARY

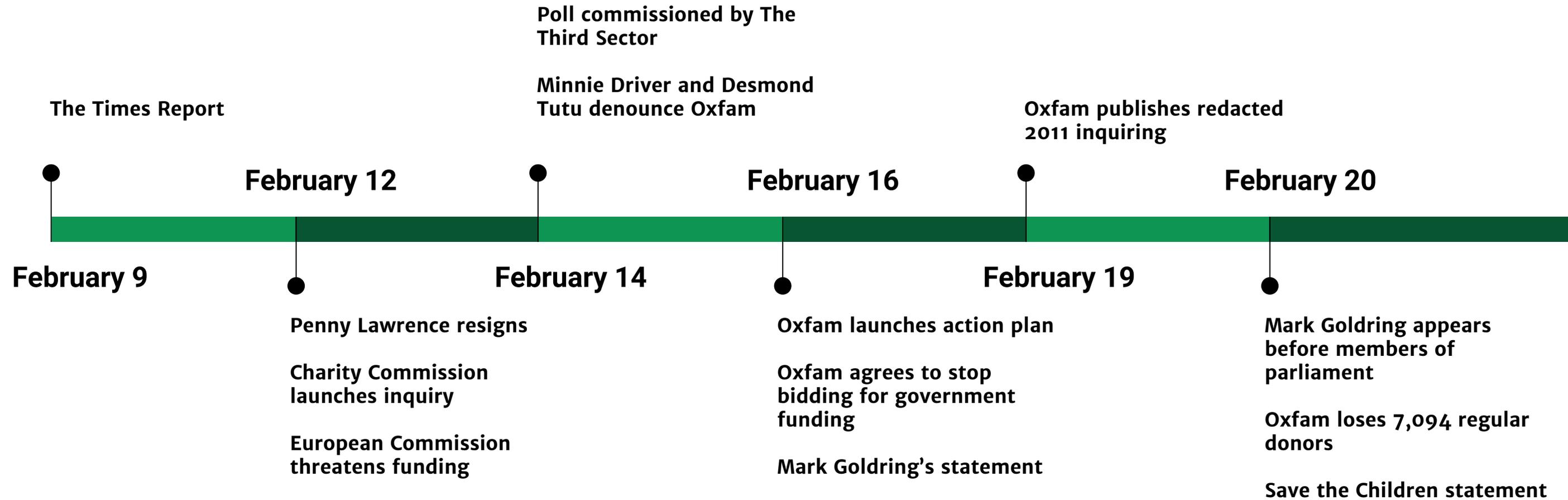
The Oxfam case study covers the organization's reaction to sexual allegations of aid workers with aid recipients after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti under the leadership of Roland van Hauwermeiren, Oxfam's former head of operations in Haiti. The leadership did not take the concerning findings of the former head of Safeguards into account and instead of confronting this problem, it tried to cover it up. This was not until February 2018 when more whistleblowers spoke up that the case got the attention of the media and action was taken.



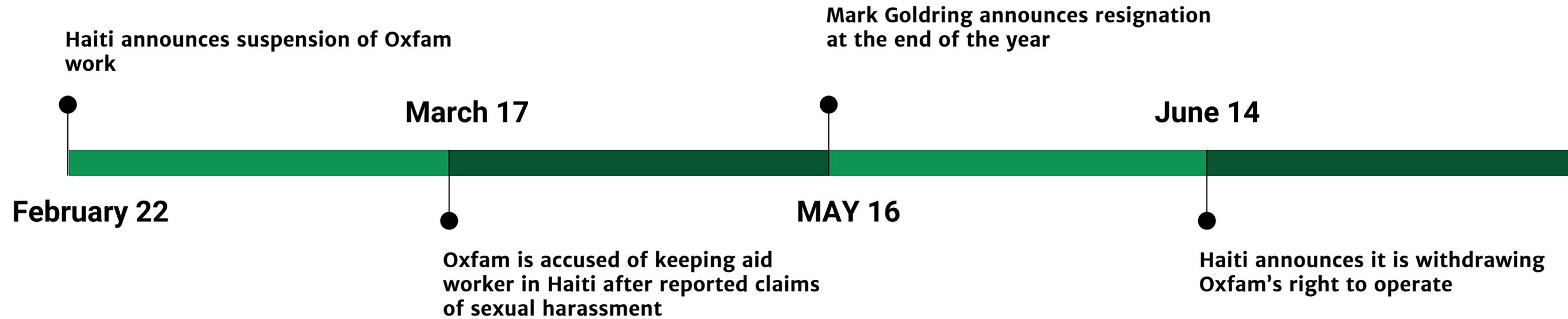
FACTS



2018



2018



COMPLIANCE

- Whistleblower policy

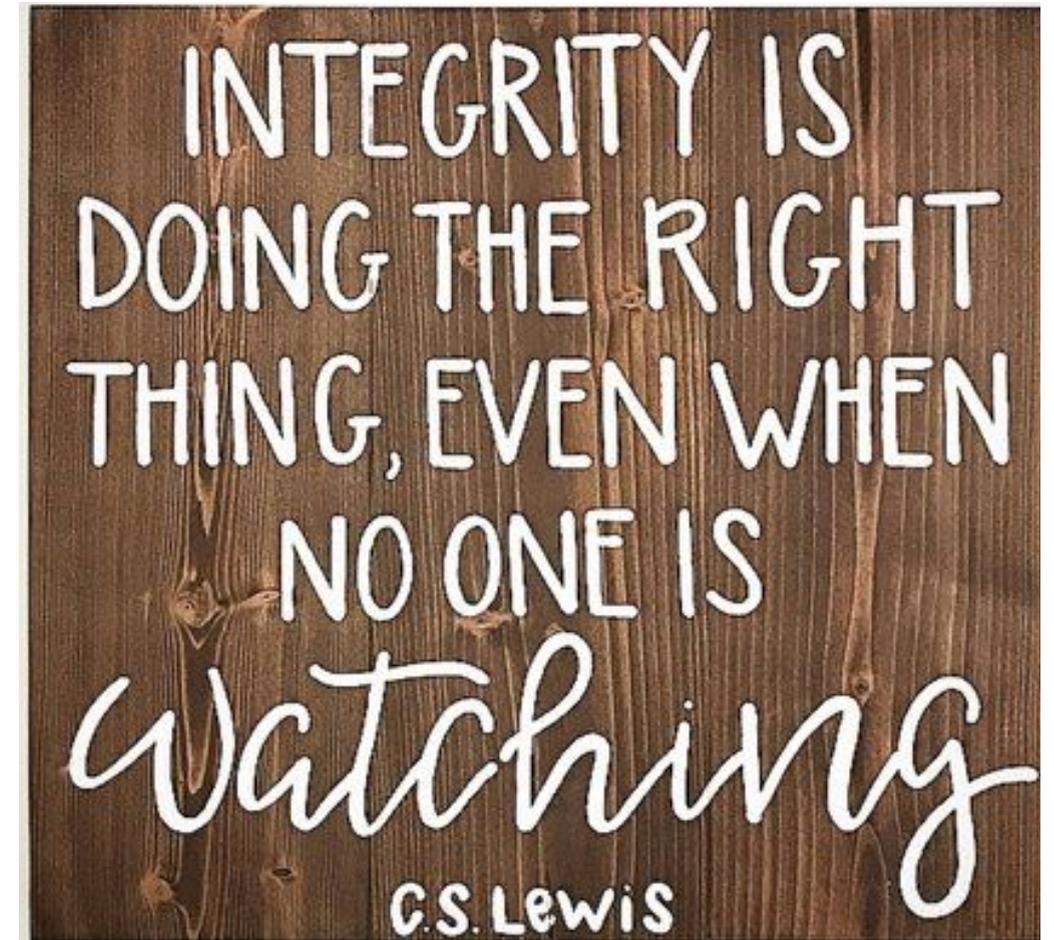


- Screening and referencing practices



INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Justifying actions and inactions
- Responsibility of the Whistleblowers and Witnesses
- Actions of the individual must adhere to the organization's mission.



ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Implemented whistleblower policy
- Duty of care, loyalty and obedience
- 10-Point Plan

1. An Independent High-Level Commission on Sexual Misconduct, Accountability and Culture Change

2. Reiterated commitment to collaborate with all relevant authorities

3. Re-examine past cases and encourage other witnesses or survivors to come forward

4. Increase our investment in safeguarding

5. Strengthen internal processes

6. Re-enforce a culture of zero tolerance towards harassment, abuse or exploitation

7. Work with our peers across the sector to tackle physical, sexual and emotional abuse

8. Active engagement with partners and allies, especially women's rights organizations

9. Listen to the public

10. Recommit and strengthen our focus on gender justice externally

SYSTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY

- Culture of Impunity
- Uphold the honesty and integrity within the humanitarian sector

- CULTURE OF IMPUNITY -

INDIVIDUAL

THREATS
ATTACKS
MURDER
INTIMIDATION
KIDNAPPING
TORTURE
THREATS TO FAMILY
EXILE
IMPRISONMENT
LAWSUITS
BLACKMAIL
TARGETED THUGGERY
SMEAR CAMPAIGNS
SELF CENSORSHIP
JOB TERMINATION
BANKRUPTCY
CYBER ATTACKS

SOCIETAL

FEAR
ILL-INFORMED PUBLIC
POLITICAL APATHY
INSECURITY
SURVEILLANCE
STIGMA AGAINST WHISTLEBLOWERS
CENSORSHIP

NATIONAL

CORRUPTION
ORGANISED CRIME
ABUSE OF STATE POWER
COLLUSION OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS
DISRESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
WAR
WEAK RULE OF LAW
POLITICISED JUDICIARY
JUDICIAL HARASSMENT
LEGAL INEQUALITY
LACK OF POLITICAL WILL
REPPRESSED CIVIL SOCIETY
MEDIA MONOPOLY
REPRESSIVE LAWS

INTERNATIONAL

GLOBAL ECONOMIC INTERESTS
CORPORATE INTERESTS
INTERNATIONAL
POLITICAL
INTERESTS
WEAK HUMAN RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT
EXCESSIVE RESPECT FOR SOVEREIGNTY
WIDESPREAD TREATY VIOLATIONS

EXPRESSION RESTRAINED
The culture of impunity takes many forms. All of them silence free expression.

INDIVIDUAL
In a culture of impunity, those who speak out may be subjected to threats, attacks and even murder. Many of these crimes go uninvestigated. When human rights are not respected, expressing yourself can have deadly consequences.

SOCIETAL
A culture of impunity fosters a climate of fear, apathy and suspicion where individuals are afraid to talk about the issues that affect their communities and societies at large. The result? An ill-informed society resigned to the status quo.

NATIONAL
Weak rule of law and the failure of national institutions are at the root of a culture of impunity. In a country with pervasive corruption, unchecked state power and an ineffective judicial system, justice cannot be served.

INTERNATIONAL
When international political and economic agendas are prioritised over individual human rights, these interests become driving forces in creating and sustaining an unjust culture of impunity.

DAYTOENDIMPUNITY.ORG

INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END IMPUNITY 23 NOVEMBER

STAKEHOLDERS ANALYSIS

- **Clients**

Can create insecurity among the clients receiving aid

- **Donors**

Mistrust and withdrawal from the donations - 7,094 donors lost (Feb 2018)

- **Field aid workers**

Must undergo more extensive vetting and training

- **Leadership**

Must be held accountable and directly compliant with duties of trust, loyalty and care.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

- Proper screening and referencing of the candidates
- Staff care and training



QUESTIONS

Do you think that Oxfam would be in the same situation if the whistleblower had exposed the scandal right away?

How can you ensure that the vulnerable communities you serve are not being abused or taken advantage of by aid workers, businessmen, peacekeepers, missionaries, and journalists?

What kind of measure could be in place to ensure accountability at the executive level beyond enforcing of the whistleblower policy?



QUESTIONS

Would this scandal have been avoidable if the whistleblower policy had been included in the organization's bylaws?

Could Oxfam have acted sooner, and what can be done to warn the next employers that these men were potential predators?

Do you think that the Oxfam scandal would have gone global without the #metoo campaign?

REFERENCES

- <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/oct/17/global-register-set-up-to-keep-criminals-out-of-aid-sector?fbclid=IwAR1smoY3q7XvChbftzflcpgCzhIL1zwQaxUgXMB7e4BvfhCxts4jV1gxP1g>
- https://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/?fbclid=IwAR3dNz8vZga_sjL3oUEWg7dZVEfqyJ_vw58JFFKF_WaCEU6sm_2-naFhXEvM
- Cecile Andrzewski's book Zero Impunity
- <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/sites/default/files/Sample%20WhistleblowerPolicy%202.2010.pdf>
- <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i990.pdf>