

## Guidance about Open Information Policy

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## How to make a request for information

Requests for information can be made in writing to:

Oxfam Supporter Relations

Oxfam House

John Smith Drive

Oxford

OX4 2JY

or by e-mail to [enquiries@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oxfam.org.uk)

## Timescale for response to requests for information

We endeavour to respond promptly, and if there is any delay, all requests made to Supporter Services should nevertheless be responded to within 20 days, unless there is a compelling reason why this is not practical.

## Oxfam GB and Freedom of Information legislation

Oxfam GB is registered as a charity and a company limited by guarantee in the United Kingdom. However, it is not a public body and so is not subject to

the United Kingdom Freedom of Information Act 2000. Nevertheless, in framing this policy we have had regard to the policy aims behind the Freedom of Information Act, and our general approach is in keeping with the Act's assumption that information should be disclosed unless there is a good public policy reason for withholding it, or the cost of disclosure would be disproportionate.

## Oxfam GB and Data Protection and privacy legislation

This policy is subject to United Kingdom and European Union data protection and privacy legislation. Accordingly we will not disclose data about living individuals where this is prohibited under applicable law. See Oxfam's Privacy policy at [www.oxfam.org.uk/privacy](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/privacy)

## What information do we publish and in what media?

- A large amount of information is published on our website, whether in our main site [www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk) or on our site for development professionals [www.oxfam.org.uk/policyandpractice](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/policyandpractice)
- Our Supporter Services Department will also maintain a list of Classes of Information which explains the sorts of information that are or will be published on our website, and items within it that can be disclosed on request (a Publication Scheme). The information is not all on the website, for reasons of economy. The list will be published on our website.

We will work towards the transparency standards of the [International Aid Transparency Initiative](#).

In July 2011 we reviewed the Classes of information, and added two phases in which additional information will be published. Phase 1 information should be published by 31 March 2012 and Phase 2 information should be published by 31 March 2014. Phase 1 will include summary programme information about our projects throughout the world.

[Read more about Oxfam's work on aid transparency](#)

This policy applies to Oxfam GB. Oxfam GB is a member of [Oxfam International](#), which has 14 other national affiliated Oxfams. Where we receive a request relating to another Oxfam we will forward that request to them, but we do not have the right to insist on compliance.

## Language and translation policy

This Open Information Policy applies primarily to information requests in the English language addressed to Oxfam GB's offices in the United Kingdom. Our Programme officers in other countries will often respond to relevant requests for information, but time and resource constraints will not always make it practical to respond, whether providing information or giving reasons for not disclosing.

Most information is published in the English language. However, much information is also published in French, Spanish and Portuguese, and some limited information is also available in other languages.

For Welsh language, please see [www.oxfam.org.uk/applications/blogs/cymru-welsh](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/applications/blogs/cymru-welsh). The main barrier to producing more information in other languages is cost.

## What use may I make of the information Oxfam discloses?

Most of our publications are copyright, but may be reproduced without fee for advocacy, campaigning and non-commercial teaching, but not for resale. Any request to reproduce copyright material (save as permitted under applicable mandatory exceptions to copyright law) should be referred to [permissions@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:permissions@oxfam.org.uk).

## What information is subject to disclosure restrictions, and when might we decline disclosure in whole or in part?

*If we do not disclose information, we will give reasons for not disclosing. The most frequent reasons are:*

### **Security**

The safety of our staff is a primary concern. We will not disclose information where we consider it could jeopardise our ability to operate or the safety of our staff and that of our partners.

### **Privacy**

Some information is by its nature private to the individuals concerned.

### **Confidential information**

Information may be confidential because of legal, commercial or contractual reasons, or because its premature disclosure would jeopardise action that Oxfam is planning to take.

## **Copyright limitations**

In some cases we do not have the right to disclose information because it is someone else's copyright, and while we have the right to make internal use of it this does not extend to publishing it. We do favour open publishing where we can, such as for our policy papers.

## **Cost**

Where we consider that the cost of disclosure, whether as a time cost or a monetary cost, would be disproportionate to the request, we may decline disclosure but will explain that this is the reason.

## **Detailed information about programmes**

Our project officers' priority in information is providing information to our partners and the people for whom we work. We may decline to provide information to requests made in United Kingdom about our international programme work in other countries where this would take up significant staff time in our programme.

## **Internal planning, drafts and trivial or ephemeral information**

We will generally not disclose internal working papers that address future plans, or drafts of work, or information which we consider is of ephemeral interest such that the work involved in disclosure is in our view disproportionate.

## **Harm to operations**

We recognise the importance of how we put principles into practice. But there will be occasions where we do not disclose information because we consider that the disclosure could harm our work, whether in UK or in our international operations. An example would be information about a campaign involving particular targets, where the disclosure could jeopardise the effectiveness of the campaign.

## **Historic information**

This policy addresses information, which has come into being since 1 May 2007. While we will make reasonable efforts to deal with requests for information, it is more likely that we will decide not to disclose historic information.

## Multiple requests and requests with no discernible public benefit

Where a person makes multiple requests for information, or we consider that the work involved in dealing with the request has no discernible public benefit, we may decide not to spend time in dealing with the request. Such decision will be taken by the Head of the Supporter Services Department, and will be subject to review by the Company Secretary. If any person makes a request in an offensive manner, or has otherwise been abusive to staff or volunteers, then we may decline to engage in correspondence with that person.

## Appeals and complaints mechanism / What if I am unhappy with the way my request has been handled?

You may request a review of any decision under this Policy to withhold information by UK departments of Oxfam GB to the Company Secretary of Oxfam GB. As Oxfam GB is not a public body, there is no right of appeal to the Information Commission. If you consider Oxfam GB is acting illegally, you may complain to the Charity Commission of England and Wales, whose details are at [www.charitycommission.gov.uk](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk) or in writing to The Large Charities Unit, Charity Commission (PO Box 1227, Liverpool, L69 3UG). At this time we do not have an appeal process against failure by our country programmes to disclose information.

## No contractual rights

This policy is not a binding contract and does not confer legal rights on any person. Individuals may however have rights concerning their personal data held by Oxfam under applicable law.

## Who is responsible for the development of this policy?

The day to day aspects of this Policy are the responsibility of the Director of Communications, with support from the Head of Supporter Services, the International Finance Director and the Company Secretary. They will report annually on the implementation of this policy to the Corporate Management Team and to the Chair of Oxfam GB's Council of Trustees, including with patterns of requests for information.

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Valid until September 2014

Author: The Director of Communications and the Company Secretary