



A number of claims about the vetting of Oxfam workers have been investigated by the Charity Commission

BEN GURR FOR THE TIMES

## Oxfam investigated over vetting failures, eight years after Haiti scandal

An insider claimed nearly half of new staff between 2022 and 2024 did not have complete disclosure checks, despite the charity's pledge to overhaul safeguarding

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Sean O'Neill

Tuesday January 27 2026, 1.00pm GMT, The Times

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Oxfam has been investigated for major flaws in staff vetting practices, despite its promises to overhaul safeguarding in the wake of the Haiti sexual abuse scandal.

The Times understands that the aid giant made several "serious incident reports" to the Charity Commission between 2023 and

2025, concerning major lapses in vetting new staff and checking references in Britain and around the world.

The commission said it had opened a compliance case which had identified “systemic vetting failures” and issued Oxfam’s trustees with “formal regulatory guidance”.

The problems were first detected in Oxfam’s operations in Ukraine and Poland during an investigation into a staff member in 2023, but further checks revealed identical issues in recruitment processes across many of the 79 countries where Oxfam works.



Oxfam staff helped distribute food, water and medical care to Haitians after a 7.0-magnitude earthquake in 2010

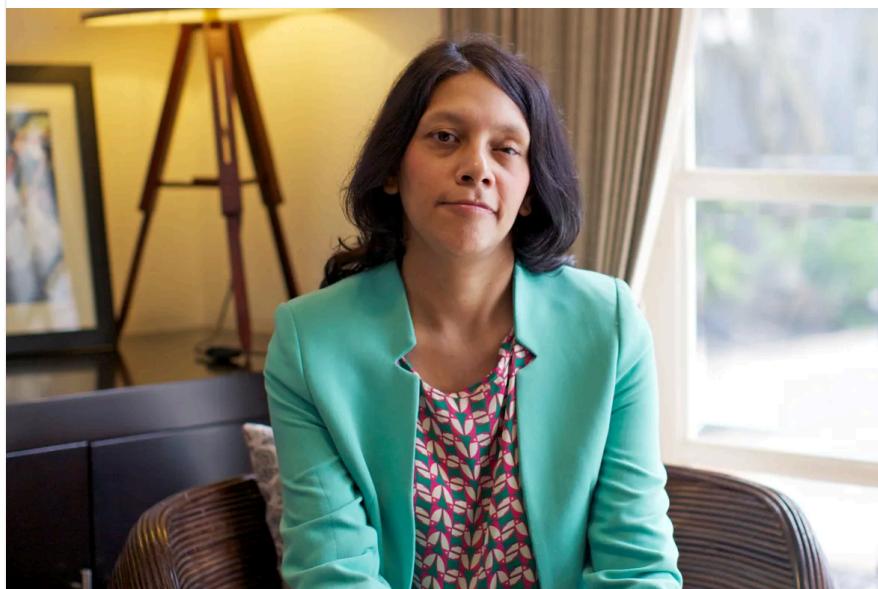
ELIANA APONTE/REUTERS

One insider claimed that 45 per cent of about 600 new employees and volunteers in Britain between 2022 and 2024 did not have references and Disclosure and Barring Service checks properly completed. Oxfam said it did not recognise the numbers.

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The source said the situation was “a shambles” and claimed that the board of trustees, responsible for the charity’s governance, should resign, adding: “The regulator was livid and explicit that these issues should have been remedied after the Haiti report. The overall message to the trustees was ‘what the hell have you been doing since 2019?’”

The revelation of the vetting failures is a severe blow for Oxfam, which has an annual income of £339 million and is already reeling from the [sacking by the trustees of its chief executive](#) Halima Begum just before Christmas. Begum became Oxfam chief in 2024, after the new vetting crisis was uncovered and oversaw the work, known as Project Indigo, to correct it.



Halima Begum

In 2018 Oxfam was placed in “special measures” and blocked from receiving UK government aid after [The Times revealed](#) it covered up the sexual exploitation of earthquake victims by some of its aid workers in Haiti.

Oxfam had investigated allegations, including serious claims against the Haiti country director Roland van Hauwermeiren in 2011. He and two other men were allowed to resign while four others were dismissed. The charity did not disclose the nature of their misconduct to donors, regulators or the government.



Corail, a camp for people displaced by the 2010 earthquake

ANDRES MARTINEZ CASARES/REUTERS

A statutory inquiry by the regulator [concluded in 2019](#) that “weaknesses in the charity’s HR practices, particularly concerning problems around vetting and referencing and management oversight, led to a culture of tolerance of poor behaviour”.

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An independent review of the charity’s HR safeguarding practices concluded: “The key message here is one of inconsistency combined with a lack of thoroughness.”

The regulator ordered Oxfam to follow an action plan which included 14 recommendations for improvements to vetting and safeguarding. A particular problem was identified in its UK charity shops, where nine registered sex offenders were found to be working alongside young volunteers. At the time Oxfam

said it was “changing and the steps we are taking are putting Oxfam on the right path for the future”. The charity was not cleared to receive UK government aid funding again until 2022.

The new vetting problems were first reported to the Charity Commission in March 2024. Internal documents reveal that the charity’s trustees, responsible for its governance, were “aware that we have been under close scrutiny by our regulator in relation to the gaps identified in Oxfam GB referencing processes”.

The internal summary refers to “over a year of work to discover the extent of the gaps identified, agree a remediation plan and deliver it”.

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The commission wrote to Oxfam in December to close the case, but warned it would continue monitoring the charity’s governance to ensure it was fit for purpose. It criticised the fact the vetting failures had not been picked up in Oxfam’s annual self-assessment of its safeguarding practices.

The regulator reminded Oxfam that its board of trustees “have a responsibility to protect the people their charity comes into contact with. The trustees should continue to apply as appropriate the commission’s guidance on safeguarding duties for charity trustees.”

Oxfam said: “In 2024 Oxfam’s own internal processes identified inconsistencies in referencing practices and background checks. Oxfam acted quickly and kept the Charity Commission informed throughout. We are satisfied that the steps taken to remediate the issues found were reasonable and complete.

“Following a thorough review, we are confident no one was recruited that should not have been. The matter is now concluded. We are confident in our background check processes going forward. We are committed to continually learning to make Oxfam a safer place for all.”

In 2024-25 Oxfam’s safeguarding team completed 23 investigations, 13 abroad and ten in its British charity shops, resulting in six dismissals and one resignation.

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A Charity Commission spokesperson said: “We are clear that safeguarding people from harm must be a governance priority in all charities. Last year, we closed a compliance case into Oxfam, relating to systemic vetting failures identified at the charity. We issued the trustees with formal regulatory guidance, and made clear our criticism of the charity for these lapses. We will not hesitate to take further action should wider concerns arise.”

Charity

Oxfam

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Danielle haas



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6 HOURS AGO

...

Why do people keep donating money to these rancid, morally corrupt corporate mega-charities? There are much more worthy causes.

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...

I suspect that most of the large charities' income doesn't come from individual people, but rather from Government/Council or other public sector bodies.

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6 HOURS AGO

...

Oxfam's record in the recent years since its previous sex and abuse of famine victims scandals:

1. Disregarding its own much vaunted vetting processes
2. Attacking JK Rowling with obscene and horrific attacks on her and publishing attacks on women who express concerns about trans men invading women's safe ...

[See more](#)[Reply](#) • [☆ Recommend \(90\)](#) • [Share](#)**D Eisen**

5 HOURS AGO

...

Add to that, describing October 7th as a 'military offensive' on their website

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6 HOURS AGO

...

These charities have become a business with ridiculous amount of money wasted on huge salaries for their boards and they have also turned into a lobbying group for all sorts of trendy "causes". I stopped supporting Oxfam after the

Haiti scandal.

My views were reaffirmed after they jumped on the tra...See more (Edited)

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W

**Winifred Marlow**

6 HOURS AGO

...

Not commenting on your sentiment but Trustees on the Board of a charity are not paid a salary - they may ask for expenses to be paid, according to Charity Commission guidelines.

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S

**S Cuthbertson**

6 HOURS AGO

...

Anyone who has worked for a major charity will not be shocked by this. I worked for one of the largest disability charities and was appalled by the amount of money spent on pointless meetings. The vast majority of management never ever saw anyone with a disability.

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A

**Alex Keith**

6 HOURS AGO

...

I've worked with two and concur. Self interest, an obsession with race (including a Director telling a colleague that all white people are racist and racism being used to excuse sexual harassment), high levels of sick absence, petty and vexatious grievances and constant complaining.

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S

**S Lew**

5 HOURS AGO

...

The Oxfam website has as its main story the lack of peace and security for women in the 'occupied Palestinian Territories'.

Not a word about women in Iran, not a word about women in Afghanistan.

Most of the population of the West Bank lives in Area A, administered by the PA, all of the population o...

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I

**I A Rose**

3 HOURS AGO

...

Because the Charity Commission, under-powered and under-resourced, focusing on procedure rather than substance, is not effectively equipped to deal with it.

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D

**Dany Chhe**

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...

Oxfam vetting was extremely rigorous. The key questions; are white people guilty of all the world's ills? Do you hate anyone right of Jezza Corbyn? Should the UK pay £230 billion in reparations? Are there 34 different human sexes? Should straight white men ever be employed?

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S

**S Godley**

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...

*Oxfam said it did not recognise the numbers.* There you have it, the problem in a nutshell.

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M

**M Nagl**

5 HOURS AGO

...

They are arts graduates. Numbers are not their thing.

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N

**Neil Sint**

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...

The Charity Sector along with NGO's are now Government sponsored Lobby Groups. Agnes Callamard of Amnesty can write 110 comments on Israel but nothing about the Human Rights of the Iranian people where over 30,000 civilians have been killed by the regime.

It is time for a freeze of all funds until ...

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[Reply](#) • [☆ Recommend \(31\)](#) • [Share](#)**Matthew March**

6 HOURS AGO

...

Like so many in the charity 'industry' Oxfam lost its way a long time ago.

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5 HOURS AGO

...

They should be investigated for antisemitism too..

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...

If this article is correct then the Oxfam Board and notably Annie Hudson as safeguarding trustee and now Co chair need to consider their positions. Shambles !

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5 HOURS AGO

...

Close it down? Soon.

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4 HOURS AGO

...

Oxfam is totally discredited and one of the reasons why many people now will not donate to these charities.

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5 HOURS AGO

...

Oxfam spends our money lobbying on climate change. You'll know this if you've seen their advertising. That's fine if you know where your money is going, but personally I don't think that bandwagon needs any more gas.

[Reply](#) • [☆ Recommend \(18\)](#) • [Share](#)**M Nagl**

5 HOURS AGO

...

Oxfam investigated over vetting failures, eight years after Haiti scandal

They also advocate in favour of poor countries  
adopting socialist policies which ensure that they  
remain poor.

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**John Adsett**

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...

Law unto themselves. Have been for years

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**Jane Smith**

4 HOURS AGO

...

Oxfam supports Hamas.

What do you expect?

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**Karl Dunkerley**

3 HOURS AGO

...

This is why I no longer give to the big charities. Too many run by privately educated middle class fat cats milking the generosity and hard work of millions of ordinary donors.

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**P Walters**

3 HOURS AGO

...

Yep, and DEI officers earning £60k a year.

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**Nigel Hemming**

4 HOURS AGO

...

Yet another example of a once cherished institution failing to perform in line with its code of conduct. Although Government funding has significantly decreased over recent years, it should be stopped altogether.

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**Richard Hamilton**

4 HOURS AGO

...

Surely this is a charity that has grown so large to the extent that it cannot properly manage itself. When I was a boy I used to give them a share of my pocket money for the work

Oxfam investigated over vetting failures, eight years after Haiti scandal they were doing for children in Africa. Now I am in a position to help a lot more but they have completely lost my confi...

[See more](#)

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**Rohan De Silva**

5 HOURS AGO

...

Is this "revenge" for the removal (correctly, in my opinion) of Halima Begum?

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**I Smart**

5 HOURS AGO

...

Oh dear, oh dear

Oxfam have such lofty ideals but can't get the basics of running a business right

How about diverting some of their EDI peeps to Safeguarding roles?

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**P Hicks**

3 HOURS AGO

...

Why would 'predatory' individuals want to work with vulnerable people? It's a mystery!

An even bigger mystery is why Oxfam's vetting procedures are so lax?

Especially after the staff 'sexual misconduct' in Haiti and Chad.

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**C Rayfield**

4 HOURS AGO

...

Many charities have so much money that they have 'morphed' into investment funds. They are intent on accumulating funds rather than using them for the charitable purposes that people have donated the money for.

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**Andrew Mills**

3 HOURS AGO

...

And paying CEO's vast salaries they could not command in the private sector

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**David Wright**

3 HOURS AGO

...

People can say BTL that organisations like this will no longer get my money but the reality is that they stopped worrying about what the public think years ago as its far easier to plug straight into all that lovely government funding . Thats where the real money is made.

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**ian dilworth**

4 HOURS AGO

...

Like the royal family , well meaning but failed. Perverted into something else. Like the NHS . managers have ruined it. Without meaning to.

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**Jema Marshall**

3 HOURS AGO

...

I stopped giving to Oxfam and other bloated charities years ago. I now give to causes when I know they will receive the donation. Recently a friend went to Cameroun and we contributed money for him to buy things to take to a poor family that he knew. That kind of thing.

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**C Turner**

3 HOURS AGO

...

My local Oxfam shop had a sex offender volunteering alongside young adults with learning disabilities

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**DAVID HUSE**

5 HOURS AGO

...

CEO pay of £124,000 pa.

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**Nick Rogers**

5 HOURS AGO

...

Not thar much given its size and complexity.

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3 HOURS AGO

...

Very simple - don't give money to oxfam....in any case, the government already does (using your tax) !

[Reply](#) • [★ Recommend \(4\)](#) • [Share](#)**Sean O'Neill** STAFF

...

3 HOURS AGO

actually Oxfam gets no UK govt money currently - but the public gives £100+ m in donations and legacies

[Reply](#) • [★ Recommend \(2\)](#) • [Share](#)**C Hutchby**

2 HOURS AGO

...

I stopped giving to them many years ago when I was informed they paid for window dressers. My mum used to do a great job at the Cancer Research shop for nowt.

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