

Annex 1: Commission for Civil Society Consultation Response

Examples of Oxfam's work which may be affected

National activity:

Climate change campaigning 2009/ 2010

In the lead up to the Copenhagen climate change summit in December 2009, and the UK General Election in May 2010 Oxfam and the organisations in the Stop Climate Chaos coalition worked on a huge range of events which, taken together, would breach the new spending cap. These events included:

- The Kingsnorth Mili-band - where over 1,000 supporters came together to form a human chain around the Kingsnorth coal power station then had an outdoor rally including speakers from Bangladesh and Kenya.
- The Wave, a huge march through London that 50,000 supporters attended – the biggest public mobilisation event ever on climate change.
- Oxfam hosting international visitors from our programmes in Bangladesh and Kenya for climate hearings to understand the impacts of climate change on them.
- The Ask the Climate Questions campaign, leading up to the general election. A constituency based campaign with coalition organisations encouraging their supporters to raise climate action as one of their top three priorities when speaking to MPs, pollsters, local parliamentary candidates, neighbours, friends and the wider public.
- Schools Conferences - four conferences with schools from across England to talk about climate change, with MPs invited to panel debate on day

In addition, constituency activity as part of this campaign would have breached the constituency spending limits. As part of the campaign local hustings events ('climate question times') took place in 50 constituencies.

These hustings adhered to strict rules, but staff from a range of organisations worked on them, with total costs around £2280 per constituency. Additionally, all other material for any constituency specific activity – materials, posters to promote the campaign, staff time delivering it, would be counted, as well as central campaign costs - reports, insight, promotional material for the campaign, which would exceed £9,750.

Constituency activity:

Birthrights 2012

A photo exhibition to highlight that 1 in every 66 women in Ghana die in childbirth, which took place in a number of constituencies across the country including in Andrew Mitchell's (then Secretary of State for International Development) constituency and created lots of digital actions and content. We paid for a staff member and photographer to fly out to Ghana for 1-2 weeks to collect photos and stories, and worked with an Oxfam volunteer campaigner to organise the event in the local constituency, but the total cost of the initiative was more than 5,000, when associated media and advocacy work and staff time are included.

We also asked some of our UK poverty partners to consider their work which may be affected.

Single Parent Action Network (SPAN)

"We don't see ourselves just as a local organisation providing services. Through our interaction with single parents and through our research we see what works for single parents to help them thrive

and how services could be improved and we want to share these with policy makers. As a charity operating on a local grassroots level we are able to see very quickly the impact of policy changes. This enables SPAN to be well placed to work with policy makers. We feel passionately about the role of charities (of all sizes) to have a voice in Parliament and with policy makers. Oxfam's support has enabled our modestly sized charity to do this. We think something would be lost if smaller organisations were not able to lobby directly during election periods. Without pressing for change and highlighting the shortcomings or positive aspects of policy on the ground we would then just become a sticking plaster for poverty.

Recently, we invited our MP to our AGM. It was an opportunity for her to hear about the direct experience of single parents and welfare changes and for the parents to learn more about the political process and having a voice. The MP has subsequently asked a series of questions on welfare reform and single parents in the House of Commons. We would be concerned that inviting our local MP and PPCs to events with our members and clients could be caught under the activities of the Bill, and that we would need to register as the cost of putting on such an event in addition to other activities we may undertake in the year – including the staff costs of all the staff involved with an AGM and its preparation – would likely exceed £5,000. We would also be concerned that we would then exceed the constituency limit if we did any other kind of activity in the year before an election. We consider this kind of activity to be key to the democratic process and engagement in the run up to the elections, however. It would seriously hamper our normal engagement with local politicians.”

Clydebank Independent Resource Centre

“We are an advice centre, covering a wide range of issues from welfare and benefits to debt advice. We often work with other organisations who provide advice to draw on the information that each organisation holds and produce research which shows a more complete picture of the issues in our communities. Whilst we provide advice, we also feel part of our role is to speak out on the issues we see through our work and to influence decision makers to change policies and to campaign on social justice concerns.

One such coalition is the Foodshare network, which consists of a number of different advice and service organisations in the area. We share information, statistics and research and may combine this data into a joint report highlighting the key concerns we jointly have. We will publish this report and distribute it to politicians to influence policies. This could also include a joint event to raise awareness and debate the issues with politicians and party candidates. We may do this for both the Scottish referendum on independence and the general election. Jointly, the organisations would spend more than £2,000 and so would need to register and each have to report on the aggregated spend for the network. We feel this is overly onerous as many organisations are small and do not have the capacity to provide extra administration functions. Some of the organisations in the network would leave because of it and this would be detrimental to the network.

We also produce an annual report in which we also highlight key policy concerns we have, provide case studies highlighting the issues that people we work with are facing, and circulate it to MSPs to influence policy decisions on social justice issues. The costs of staff time in producing the report, designing, printing and publishing it during a year before the referendum and then the general

election would likely exceed £2,000 causing us to provide returns simply for producing a report that we're required to produce annually and happens to fall within a year before an election or referendum."

Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre (MWRC) www.mwrc.org.uk

"Amina MWRC works with mainstream agencies and policy makers, to enhance their understanding of the Muslim community and of barriers that prevent Muslim women from accessing services and participating in society. We provide a range of services to Muslim women. We work to dispel the myths around Muslim women and to support integration and diversity in communities, not to influence political parties or candidates. However, we do engage with them to raise awareness of the issues and enable Muslim women to speak out for themselves about the issues they live with, and to change policy.

We run two ongoing campaigns as part of our wider work. One is called You Can Change This (www.changethis.org.uk) and is about tackling Violence Against Women and Girls and the other is called I Speak for Myself (www.ispeakformyself.org), which helps challenge myths around Muslim women and promote greater acceptance of diversity in communities. Both started in 2012 and are funded by the Scottish Government. Both have campaigning elements which are about raising awareness of the issues and seeking to influence policy changes which will benefit Muslim women.

Both campaigns have websites and engage with people via social media, videos as well as more traditional media and roadshows. We think both these campaigns could be caught under the Lobbying Bill as we hope they will continue to run after May 2014 the costs of running the websites, the video productions, putting on public events for women to speak to politicians and roadshows showcasing the work and myth busting, staff time, and transport over the course of a year will come to more than £2,000. Both the online and physical aspects of the campaign engage with politicians to raise their awareness and gain their support. This will put additional administrative burdens on us to provide regular returns to the electoral commission as we will need to account and cost staff time, account for in-kind costs (the websites are free to us) which will deter us and our trustees from wanting to engage with this activity."